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# Machito and His Afro-Cubans: Selected Transcriptions

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**Roles**

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# Machito and His Afro-Cubans: Selected Transcriptions

## **Description**

Machito (Francisco Raúl Grillo, 1909–1984) was born into a musical family in Havana, Cuba, and was already an experienced vocalist when he arrived in New York City in 1937. In 1940 he teamed up with his brother-in-law, the Cuban trumpeter Mario Bauzá (1911–1993), who had already made a name for himself with top African American swing bands such as those of Chick Webb and Cab Calloway. Together, Machito and Bauzá formed Machito and his Afro-Cubans. With Bauzá as musical director, the band forged vital pan-African connections by fusing Afro-Cuban rhythms with modern jazz and by collaborating with major figures in the bebop movement. Highly successful with Latino as well as black and white audiences, Machito and his Afro-Cubans recorded extensively and performed in dance halls, nightclubs, and on the concert stage. In this volume, ethnomusicologist Paul Austerlitz and bandleader and professor Jere Laukkanen (both experienced Latin jazz performers) present transcriptions from Machito's recordings which meticulously illustrate the improvised as well as scored vocal, reed, brass, and percussion parts of the music. Austerlitz's introductory essay traces the history of Afro-Cuban jazz in New York, a style that exerted a profound impact on leaders of the bebop movement, including Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, who appears as a guest soloist with Machito on some of the music transcribed here. This is MUSA's first volume to represent the significant Latino heritage in North American music.

## **Keywords**

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MACHITO AND HIS AFRO-CUBANS

SELECTED TRANSCRIPTIONS

Edited by Paul Austerlitz and Jere Laukkanen

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# THE AFRO-CUBAN IMPACT ON MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES: MARIO BAUZÁ AND MACHITO

Paul Austerlitz

Variiegated influences from around the globe have blended and collided to fashion the mosaic of music in the United States. However, conventional notions of immigrant culture assimilating into a European-American “mainstream” typically ignore the fact that Europeans themselves arrived in this land as migrants.<sup>1</sup> Assimilationist models of immigration are further flawed in their assignment of normative status to Anglo-American culture.<sup>2</sup> The fact that Spaniards colonized much of North America before the English, for example, challenges the concept of Anglo centrality in the United States. Social historian Juan Flores points out that the Latino experience in the United States has been a matter of neither “eventual accommodation nor ‘cultural genocide.’” Instead, the Latino experience constitutes “a more intricate structuring of ethnicity. . . . Rather than being subsumed and repressed . . . [Latino] culture contributes . . . to a new amalgam.”<sup>3</sup> While Latinos in North America hail from many different countries, they share a common language and therefore comprise a group that is widely diverse, but also united in many ways. “America” itself is a contested and troubled concept, a shifting borderland. Americans continually redefine what it means to be Native, Anglo, Latin, or African American: as salsa composer Rubén Blades’s song puts it, we are perpetually “*buscando América*,” we are always “discovering America.”<sup>4</sup> The resulting montage constitutes the heart of North American culture.

Today, the United States boasts a Latino population of more than 16.3% of the total population,<sup>5</sup> and while strides have been made to document Latino culture in the United States, academic discourse on the music of the United States still often neglects the contributions of Latinos. Of the various manifestations of Latino culture in the United States, Cuban-influenced music stands out. Even casual attention to jazz history and popular culture (such as the *I Love Lucy* television program, 1951–1957) affirms that various forms of Latin music have long been integral to North American life. The New York-based band called Machito and his Afro-Cubans (founded in 1940) and their musical director, Mario Bauzá (1911–1993), were significant exponents of Latino culture in the United States, whose amalgam of North American and

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1. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*.

2. See Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*; Portes and Zhou, “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants.”

3. Flores, *Divided Borders*, 185, 192.

4. *Ibid.*, 199–224; O’Gorman, *The Invention of America*, 105–122.

5. Ennis, “The Hispanic Population,” 3, accessed 18 September 2015, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>. The figure comes from the 2010 U.S. census, and of course, omits undocumented residents.

Cuban styles exerted a major impact on jazz and popular music. While most Cuban dance music in the middle of the twentieth century was influenced by North American styles to some extent, Bauzá and Machito played central roles in the development of Latin jazz in the United States. Although the Machito band compared favorably to top Cuban bands of their day, they were not among the foremost dance bands in Cuba. And while some of their recordings were popular at one time in Cuba, Machito and his Afro-Cubans never performed there. In fact, Cuban musicologist Leonardo Acosta points out that while Machito was “almost unknown” in Cuba, he is nevertheless better known on the global stage than is the eminent Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona.<sup>6</sup> The Machito band exerted a formative influence on Latin jazz as well as *salsa*, and exerted an indirect but significant influence on the development of non-Latin popular music. The publication of the music in this edition and this introductory essay will show that Machito and his Afro-Cubans was a North American institution that had a major impact on music in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

## THE AFRO-LATIN TINGE

Pioneering jazz composer and pianist Jelly Roll Morton famously stated that a “Spanish tinge . . . has so much to do with the typical jazz idea. If one can’t manage to put these tinges of Spanish in these tunes, they’ll never be able to get the right season[ing], I call it, for jazz music.”<sup>8</sup> Ethnomusicologist John Storm Roberts and others have documented this “Latin tinge,” demonstrating its centrality not only to early jazz, but also to many other forms of music in the United States.<sup>9</sup> However, musicologist Charles Garrett points out that this tinge should be studied “not as a single entity but as a multifaceted variable array of influences, not as a singular tinge but as a collective set of Latin tinges that color the history of American music.”<sup>10</sup> In various localities and times, sundry Cuban, Mexican, Argentinian, Brazilian, and other Latin influences have affected music in the United States. Influences from West and Central Africa, of course, also have blended with Latin and Anglo musics in North America.

These tinges already constituted a rich *mélange* in nineteenth and early twentieth century New Orleans. Louisiana was founded as a French colony, was ceded to Spain from 1764 to 1800, and then was returned to France, only to be sold to the United States in 1803. Louisiana’s cultural ties to the Caribbean islands were pervasive; it is estimated that in the years 1776 and 1777 alone, 2500 enslaved people of African descent came to New Orleans from Martinique. An additional 3000 came from the French colony of Saint-Domingue after the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804; this emigration more than tripled the size of the city. Many members of the latter exodus came via Cuba, adding a Spanish layer to the Afro-French strain.<sup>11</sup> Afro-Caribbean drumming and dance had a high profile during Sunday celebrations at the city’s Congo Square in the early nineteenth century. In 1889, the Louisiana composer W. T. Francis wrote, “You can listen in New Orleans to the melodic music of the Spanish nations.”<sup>12</sup> Mexican music was also influential in New Orleans, with touring groups making favorable impressions on the locals, and with Mexican music teachers and performers

6. Acosta, *Del tambor al sintetizador*, 16.

7. Portions of this essay were previously published in Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness*.

8. Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, 78.

9. Roberts, *The Latin Tinge*, 3; Roberts, *Latin Jazz*; Borneman, “Jazz and the Creole Tradition”; Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz”; Brewer, “The Use of Habanera Rhythm in Rockabilly”; Lewis, “Ghosts, Ragged but Beautiful: Influences of Mexican Music”; Stewart, “Funky Drummer”; Fiehrer, “From Quadrille to Stomp.”

10. Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 82.

11. Borneman, “Jazz and the Creole Tradition,” 102.

12. Quoted in Gushee, “The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz,” 16. Also see Borneman, “Jazz and the Creole Tradition,” 99.

settling there.<sup>13</sup> New Orleans Creole composer and piano virtuoso Louis Moreau Gottschalk was strongly influenced by local music, for example in his *La bamboula, danse negre no. 2* and *Bananier chanson nègre*, Op. 5. Several of Jelly Roll Morton's compositions, such as "Mama 'Nita" and "New Orleans Blues," employ Latin tinges,<sup>14</sup> as do Joe "King" Oliver's "Jazzin' Baby Blues" and Miff Mole's "Crazy Rhythm."<sup>15</sup> As jazz began to spread northward from New Orleans, the Argentine tango, which had become a Parisian cosmopolitan fad, also became dominant in the landscape of North American popular music. Blues composer W. C. Handy, who had visited Cuba in 1900, expressed interest in Cuban music. In 1914 he composed "St. Louis Blues," which features a tango rhythm.<sup>16</sup> New York stride pianists such as Charles Luckeythe "Luckey" Roberts also incorporated Latin elements,<sup>17</sup> and Duke Ellington, Charlie Barnet, and other bandleaders incorporated Latin influences in the decades that followed.

### CLAVE: THE KEY TO AFRO-CUBAN MUSIC

The rhythm most often identified with the Latin tinge is called the *tresillo*, which means "triplet" in Spanish, but which actually consists of this syncopated duple rhythm: ♪ . ♪ . ♪ | . The *tresillo* is closely related to so-called *cinquillo* ("quintuplet"), which redacts the *tresillo*'s dotted quarter notes: ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ | . The *tresillo* and *cinquillo* rhythms are of West and Central African origin, as can be seen in their similarity to this time-line used in *gabú*, a dance music of the Ewe people of Ghana: ♪ . ♪ . ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | .

Related rhythmic patterns permeate the art of "patting juba," which combines rhymed declamations with clapping and patting the thighs. "Patting juba" flourished among African Americans in the antebellum period, later developing into a rhyme-song genre dubbed the "ham-bone." Jazz historian Gunther Schuller notes that similar African-derived rhythms appear in ragtime, citing Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" as an example.<sup>18</sup> Cuban musicologist Alejo Carpentier shows that though the *cinquillo* is found throughout the Caribbean, it emerged on the foreground of Cuban music in the nineteenth century as a result of the mass influx of Haitians that came to Cuba in the wake of the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804. Indeed, *cinquillo*-related rhythms are prevalent in many Haitian genres (such as Vodou drumming and *konpa*).

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these rhythms emerged as a hallmark of Cuban music. They should therefore be considered *Afro-Latin* tinges, to be distinguished from Spanish-derived influences emanating from Mexico and elsewhere. Most Afro-Cuban genres employ a *tresillo*-related rhythm called the *clave*, which became identified as a hallmark of their style. *Clave* literally refers to a musical instrument consisting of two sticks that are struck together, but the word *clave* also means "key," as in the key to a puzzle. Several permutations of the *clave* serve as deep structural elements of Cuban genres ranging from *son* to *rumba*. The *clave* underlies most Cuban dance music and is fundamental to the music of Machito and his Afro-Cubans: ♪ . ♪ . ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ | .

One of the earliest written sources concerning the *clave* was a report by Emilio Grenet published in 1939 by the Cuban government as an attempt to clarify

13. Gushee, "The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz," 16; Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 57; Washburne, "The Clave of Jazz."

14. Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 58–69; Roberts, *The Latin Tinge*, 25.

15. Cristóbal Díaz Ayala goes so far as to make the enticing but perhaps equivocal suggestion that the cornet/clarinet/trumpet front line used in early jazz may derive from Cuban *danzón* recordings using this instrumentation that came to New Orleans in the early twentieth century. Díaz Ayala, *Cuando salí de La Habana*, 61; Bruckner-Haring, "El jazz desde la perspectiva caribeña."

16. Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 122–36.

17. *Ibid.*, 18.

18. Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 24.



misconceptions about Cuban music in the international community. It states that *clave* is a fundamental organizing principle in Cuban music:

Going only slightly into the rhythmic structure of our music we find that all its melodic design is constructed on a rhythmic pattern of two measures, as though both were only one, the first is antecedent, strong, and the second is consequent, weak. . . . The *claves* incarnate the rhythmical tyranny of our song and . . . lead the steps of our dancers who follow the *claves* as closely as the shadow follows the body.<sup>19</sup>

*Son* groups usually include the *clave* instrument, but even when the instrument is not present, the *clave* rhythm is implied by the other instruments and voices. Musicians talk about being “in *clave*” when melodic rhythms as sung or played by fixed-pitched instruments imply or align with the *clave* rhythm.<sup>20</sup> The *son clave* exists in two forms: one called the 3–2 *clave*, which begins with the three-stroke (*tresillo*) followed by the two-stroke phrase (♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ |); and the other called the 2–3 *clave*, which begins with the two-stroke followed by the three-stroke phrase (♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ |).<sup>21</sup> When musical phrases, as articulated by singers, fixed-pitch instruments, or the harmonic structure, begin on the “three” side of the *clave*, they are said to “be in 3–2 *clave*.” When phrases begin on the “two” side, they are said to “be in 2–3 *clave*.” The *clave* is therefore more than a rhythm: it a key element that determines melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic phrasing—a “recipe” for Afro-Cuban music. The *clave* is central to the music of Machito and his Afro-Cubans. In this edition, for example, the vocal choruses of “Mango mangüé” are in 3–2 *clave* (see mm. 143–144), while the vocal choruses of “Que vengán los rumberos” are in 2–3 *clave* (mm. 85–86). Although New Orleans jazz and other North American genres sometimes employ *tresillo*-related rhythms, Afro-Cuban music consistently utilizes the *clave* as a central feature informing all aspects of musical structure. And although various Latin tinges have appeared in North American music since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, Machito and his Afro-Cubans played a significant role in diffusing the *clave* in the United States.

## CUBAN MUSIC, STEREOTYPE, AND REAPPROPRIATION

While significant African influences are embedded in North American culture,<sup>22</sup> in Cuba, African traditions are practiced in ways that retain extremely close ties to their Old World counterparts. For example, while the call-and-response of African American spirituals evince an undeniable African influence, Afro-Cuban religious music is often sung in African languages, refers to African cosmologies, and uses musical instruments that issue from specific ethnic groups of their home continent. Four primary African ethnic groups whose cultures have been passed down in religious traditions exist in Cuba. The Lucumí religion, known as Santería because of its syncretic incorporation of Catholic saints, derives from the Yorùbá cultures of present-day Nigeria and employs spoken and sung liturgies in the Yorùbá language, Yorùbá musical instruments, and Yorùbá cosmology and divination. The Palo complex is based on Congolese religions of Central Africa; the Arará religion derives from the Fon of Benin; and the Abacúa secret society derives from the Ejaghám of southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Camaroon.<sup>23</sup>

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19. Grenet, *Popular Cuban Music*, xv, xvii; quoted in Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz,” 67.

20. This occurs when phrasing conforms to *clave* strokes and/or when melodic rhythms parallel the *clave*'s juxtaposition of *tresillo*-based measures and measures that emphasize the down beat. See Washburne, “The Clave of Jazz,” 67; Peñalosa, *The Clave Matrix*.

21. See Peñalosa, *The Clave Matrix*.

22. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, 3.

23. Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*.

Afro-Cuban carnival music groups, or *comparsas*, elicit many Congolese influences, and their associated dance is called the *conga*. *Rumba*, a form of street drumming and dance identified with grassroots black Cuban culture, uses drums similar to those of the *comparsas*. In Cuba these are called *tumbadoras* but in the United States they were dubbed *conga* drums. The *son* is a syncretic Afro-Cuban popular dance music that emerged in eastern Cuba in the early twentieth century and soon spread to Havana, where it was influenced by the *rumba*. The classic *son* ensemble, the *sexteto*, came together in the 1920s and consists of six instruments: *tres* (a plucked lute with three double-course strings), guitar, string bass, *claves*, *maracas*, and *bongós*. *Sextetos* were often augmented by a trumpet or cornet, making them *septetos*. *Rumba* and *son* performances usually begin with a verse section with changing harmonies, and end with a vamp section called a *montuno* that showcases percussion and improvised lyrics called *inspiraciones* (“inspirations”). While incorporating Afro-Cuban elements, the musical style of the *danzón* occupies a spot closer to Spain on the continuum of African and European influences. Developing in the nineteenth century when the Euro-Cuban *contradanza* incorporated Afro-Cuban tinges, the *danzón* was originally performed by *orquestas típicas* comprising European classical wind instruments and *timbales* (small tympani). Around 1920, the *orquestas típicas* gave way to *charangas francesas* (or simply *charangas*) consisting of violins, flute, and *timbales*. Its links to both European classical forms and local African-influenced aesthetics made the *danzón* appealing to a racial cross-section of Cubans. In the middle of the twentieth century, Cuban dance bands began to mix elements of the *conga*, *rumba*, *son*, and *danzón*.

Musicologist Robin Moore has identified an irony of Cuban identity: in spite of Eurocentrism, white Cubans have repeatedly adopted elements of Afro-Cuban culture as national symbols. Afro-Cubans responded with ever more forceful assertions of in-group black identity. Similar trajectories are found elsewhere. Musicologist Charles Keil points to a dynamic in which grassroots musics are appropriated and stereotyped by dominant classes. While the marginalized group has no choice but to accept (and even at times to perpetuate) these stereotypes, it eventually reappropriates them, developing new, oppositional forms of expression.<sup>24</sup> In the 1920s, influenced by Parisian primitivism and the Jazz Age, white Cuban nationalists appropriated Afro-Cuban expression into what they considered quintessentially Cuban culture. A *conga* craze took shape as composer Eliseo Grenet’s stylized versions of the dance became popular in Havana ballrooms. From there, the *conga* traveled to Paris and New York.<sup>25</sup> Stereotyped Afro-Cuban religious themes entered pop culture: singer Miguelito Valdés, for example, popularized “Babalú,” a song named for a Yorùbá-Cuban spirit (but removed from Afro-Cuban liturgical music). White Cuban nationalist composers such as Amadeo Roldán and Alejandro García Caturla incorporated Afro-Cuban themes into their concert works. This appropriation brought black Cuban culture to the forefront of national consciousness, making it possible for Afro-Cubans to display pride in their heritage and express it on their own terms. Singer and composer Ignacio Piñero of a famed *son* group called Septeto Nacional referred to Santería in his songs “No juegues con los santos” (“Don’t Fool Around with the Saints”) and “Canto Lucumí” (“Lucumí Song”). Many *sones* of the period used African-derived words prevalent in the black slang, such as *asere* and *chévere* (“friend” and “great” in the Carabalí language).<sup>26</sup>

Stereotyped versions of the *son* and *conga* reached the United States and France in the 1920s and 1930s (the *son* received the misnomer “rumba” on the international stage). Justo “Don” Aziazpú brought his Havana Casino Orchestra to New York in 1930, making a splash with his “rumba” (or *son*) entitled “El manicero” (“The Peanut

24. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 6–7; Keil, *Urban Blues*, 43–49; Keil, “People’s Music Comparatively,” 120–27.

25. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 77–80.

26. Sublette, *Cuba and its Music*, 204.

Vendor”). Based on street vendors’ cries, it was performed with traditional *son* instrumentation and accompanied a dance show that depicted stereotypical Cuban street scenes. “The Peanut Vendor” became a big hit and was recorded in the United States many times, most notably by Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. The *salon conga* incorporated rhythms from its *conga* prototype: its well-known “one, two, three—kick” choreography derives from Afro-Cuban carnival dance. Bandleader Xavier Cugat, born in Catalonia but raised in Cuba, emerged as the foremost exponent of “Americanized” Latin music in the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> Freely admitting that “to succeed in America I gave the Americans a Latin music that had nothing authentic about it,” Cugat believed that, because “Americans know nothing about Latin music . . . they have to be given music more for the eyes than the ears. Eighty percent visual, the rest aural.”<sup>28</sup> His performances diluted and blended various Latin American influences into entertaining, flamboyant shows that stressed displays of instrumental virtuosity, attractive female singers, dancing, and flashy percussion.

North Americans also developed stereotyped notions of Latin America through cultural endeavors encouraged by public policy. The United States government’s Good Neighbor Policy, which promoted cultural and economic relations with Latin America, had been in place since Herbert Hoover’s presidency, but was largely ignored until President Franklin Delano Roosevelt revived it. During World War II, Walt Disney was hired to make animated films to support the policy. Though denials were issued at the time, memos released after the war reveal that the policy’s architects had requested a series of “direct propaganda films” intended to demonstrate “a warm feeling of interracial friendship and solidarity, counteracting Axis propaganda about Uncle Sam’s racial prejudices.”<sup>29</sup> As a result, Disney made the animated feature films *Saludos Amigos* in 1943 and *The Three Caballeros* in 1945. Despite good intentions, these along with other non-animated Hollywood efforts projected stereotyped images of domesticated, sensual Latin Americans. The films were hits in the United States. While they enjoyed some popularity in Latin America, they also engendered resentment; Universal Pictures’ film *Argentine Nights* (1940), for example, was reportedly “hooted off the screen” in Buenos Aires.<sup>30</sup>

Xavier Cugat, the Cuban bandleader Desi Arnaz, and the Brazilian singer Carmen Miranda, known as the “Brazilian Bombshell,” emerged as the top stars of Hollywood’s Latin cinema. The 1940 film *Too Many Girls*, starring Arnaz, was a mix of various Latin elements including a scene in which microbes dance the *conga*. The 1946 film *Cuban Pete* casts Arnaz as a bandleader in New York City; his later *I Love Lucy* television program brought the Cuban bandleader into living rooms across America. Inspired by Miguelito Valdés’s success with “Babalú,” Arnaz cemented his fame on the *Lucy* show by singing “Babalú” while playing a conga drum, gyrating, and letting locks of his hair fall down over his eyes. The transplantation of Afro-Cuban stereotypes—already out of context in Cuba (this song was written by a white Cuban and is not associated with Afro-Cuban religion)—to the United States was doubly ironic. Most white people, of course, had no idea that the word “Babalú” is Yorùbá and not Spanish, or that the conga drum normally accompanied carnival songs and not Babalú songs. One high-ranking Afro-Cuban priest, Felipe García Villamil, states that many black Cubans found these appropriations insulting:

This would often upset us because of . . . racism and that whole mess. They wrote arrangements and the majority of those who sang them were white [Cubans]. Also, they gave the impression that they didn’t understand what they were singing.<sup>31</sup>

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27. Cugat, *Rumba Is My Life*.

28. Roberts, *The Latin Tinge*, 87.

29. Woll, *The Latin Image in American Film*, 55.

30. *Ibid.*, 56–59.

31. Quoted in García, *Arsenio*, 22.

Indeed, Desi Arnaz betrayed ignorance about his own signature song when he erroneously claimed that “Babalú” was dedicated to a Yorùbá-Cuban spirit named Changó rather than to Babalú-Aye.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Carmen Miranda, who appeared in eight films between 1939 and 1944, gained her fame by dancing with a mock fruit basket on her head. Her self-parody and high energy made subversive readings possible, and a dynamic of re-appropriation lurked beneath the stereotyped veneer.<sup>33</sup>

## MACHITO IN CUBA

Francisco Raúl Pérez Gutierrez (who later took the surname Grillo) was born on 16 February 1908 to Rogelio Pérez and Marta Gutierrez de Pérez in a two-room *solar* (or compound apartment) in the predominantly black *barrio* (neighborhood) of Jesús María in Havana.<sup>34</sup> Francisco, called Macho by family, and Machito later by his fans, was the oldest of six children. When he was ten years old, his father became successful in the grocery business, transporting food from docks to retail outlets. Though living in a poor Afro-Cuban neighborhood, the Pérez family was better off than were its neighbors; Machito attended a private school, where he was one of the only black students. Afro-Cuban cultural practices were deeply ingrained in the *barrio*; Machito, whose grandmother was born in Africa, remembered that “the Yorùbá religion or Santería . . . to us was like the Catholic religion” was to whites: it was central to their worldview. Local rumba musicians and dancers were heroes among the neighborhood youth. Machito used to give the famed drummers free groceries simply out of respect for their music.<sup>35</sup>

The Pérez family was musical. Machito’s father, an amateur singer himself, enjoyed hiring top-flight popular musicians such as singer María Teresa Vera and bandleader Antonio María Romeu to play at his wife’s birthday parties. All of Machito’s sisters sang, and for a while they had their own *son* group.<sup>36</sup> Machito also sang as a teenager, and since he was a baritone, he generally sang harmony rather than melody. He loved to watch and listen to rehearsals of Havana’s top *son* groups, marveling especially at the maraca players. He later remembered their virtuosic control as “fantastic . . . so I said that OK, I want to learn to do this. And I locked myself in my room . . . and took the maracas,” practicing day and night. “My mother thought I was crazy.”<sup>37</sup> Machito also received instruction in *solfege* and flute.<sup>38</sup> While still a teen, he joined the top echelon of *son* musicians, debuting as a back-up singer and maraca player with the Miguel Zavalle Sextet.<sup>39</sup> His flair for playing the maracas won him attention, and when Ignacio Piñero, the leader of the famed Septeto Nacional, heard him play in 1929, Piñero invited Machito to replace their accompanying vocalist because the latter was not a good *maraquero*. Machito joined Maria Teresa Vera’s Sexteto in 1930, and then

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32. Arnaz, *A Book*, 27. Arnaz also claimed that Changó is a “god of war,” *ibid.* In fact, Changó rules thunder, while Babalu-Aye governs infectious diseases such as smallpox and (today) AIDS.

33. Roberts, “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat,” 143–53.

34. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Jon Pareles, No headline [Machito’s obituary], *New York Times*, 17 April 1984, accessed 18 September 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/17/obituaries/no-headline-128949.html>. Other sources cite Machito’s birth as occurring on 16 February in the years 1909, 1912, or 1915 in the Jesús María or Marianao Beach districts of Havana, or even in Tampa, Florida. See “Machito.” Wikipedia, accessed 31 August 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machito>; Orovio, *Cuban Music from A to Z*, 129; Chediak, *Diccionario de jazz latino*, 137.

35. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

36. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

37. *Machito, A Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Icarus Films, 1987), video-cassette (VHS); all translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

38. Raúl Fernández, personal communication with the author.

39. Salazar, “Latin Music: The Perseverance of a Culture,” 26.

substituted later that year for the famed vocalist Antonio Machin with the Sexteto Aguabama.<sup>40</sup>

## BAUZÁ IN CUBA

Mario Bauzá was born to Hilario and Dolores Bauzá on 28 April 1911 in the predominantly black *barrio* of Cayo Hueso, Havana.<sup>41</sup> His father, a cigar maker, was close friends with Arturo Andrade, a wealthy white military man with a respected position in the community, who lived in the town of Pogoloti just outside Havana. Andrade became Mario's godfather and lacking children of his own, asked Mario's father if he could raise the boy. His father consented and Mario moved in with his godparents. An amateur musician, Andrade taught *sofège* to children in the neighborhood free of charge. Mario picked up on these lessons by eavesdropping and surprised his godfather when, at about six years of age, he performed difficult *sofège* assignments perfectly. Andrade determined that Mario would receive a formal musical education from the best teachers available. The child's *sofège* instructor, however, imposed such a strict regimen that after six months Mario told his godfather he wanted to stop. But his godfather said he must continue. After studying *sofège* for two years, Mario began taking oboe lessons. When he registered his dislike of the oboe, he was allowed to switch to clarinet. The demanding practice schedule imposed upon the boy left little time for play. As Bauzá later recalled, it was just "study, study, study, so that I didn't have no kid's life."<sup>42</sup>

At age sixteen Bauzá was working as the bass clarinetist for the Havana Symphony Orchestra.<sup>43</sup> Sought by dance bands, the young clarinetist joined Antonio María Romeo's *danzón* group, one of the best in Havana. Bauzá's formal background therefore contrasts with Machito's grounding in grassroots Afro-Cuban music. Bauzá's straddling of Afro-Cuban and European forms was not uncommon in the Hispanic Caribbean, and became a major determinant of his artistic vision.

When Machito was nineteen, his father moved to Pogoloti, where Bauzá also lived. Machito met Bauzá through Machito's younger sister Estella, who was twelve at the time. Estella took a fancy to Mario, who used to come by the house to visit her. Hoping that her elder brother would approve of the relationship, Estella introduced Machito to Mario, who was well-known in the area as a musician. The two boys became friends, and often went to movies and baseball games together. More significantly, they formed a musical group and began rehearsing for a projected tour to Panama. No tour materialized, but the experiment marked the start of Bauzá and Machito's long and fertile musical collaboration.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1920s, North American record companies often recorded in the United States even when the record was intended for sale in another other country. In 1926 the Victor Talking Machine Company hired Romeo's *danzón* group to make a recording, and the entire band, including Bauzá, traveled to New York City. There Bauzá heard Fletcher Henderson's band with saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and Paul Whiteman's band with saxophonist Frankie Trumbauer. The musical excellence and innovations of these groups, compounded by their polished demeanor, greatly impressed Bauzá; he later remembered thinking that "this is what I'm looking for."<sup>45</sup>

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40. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; throughout this study, data on personnel of musical ensembles are based on data gleaned from interviews and are therefore tentative.

41. Salazar, "Latin Music: The Perseverance of a Culture," 25.

42. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

43. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

44. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

45. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown; Padura Fuentes, *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*, 16.

Upon his return to Cuba, Bauzá took up the alto saxophone and listened avidly to big band jazz broadcasts on short-wave radio from the United States. Ellington's Cotton Club performances made a special impression on him. Bauzá began to play alto saxophone in dance bands in prestigious venues such as the Montmartre Cabaret and gained notoriety on the Havana music scene for his proficiency in jazz.<sup>46</sup> The music he was playing, however, was not the jazz of Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington, but a jazz-influenced dance music, or as he later put it, a kind of "simple jazz."<sup>47</sup> Since around 1920, predominantly white Cuban groups had been playing North American dance music for white Cubans and tourists in largely segregated venues, and by the end of the decade some of these groups were blending Cuban music with North American styles. Therefore, along with a "Latin tinge" in music from the United States, there was also a "jazz tinge" in Cuban music.<sup>48</sup> One of the most popular of these Cuban groups was Orquesta los Hermanos Castro, which played both jazz-tinged dance music and stylized *son* and *conga* numbers, which gained notoriety with the band's accompanying singer Miguelito Valdés (of "Babalú" fame).<sup>49</sup> The jazz vogue in Cuba was embraced mostly by the upper middle classes, and these groups were predominantly white. Although Bauzá was hired by Los Hermanos Castro, as a minority he consistently felt the sting of racial prejudice.

In the late 1920s, Bauzá played alto saxophone and clarinet in pianist Célido Curbelo's band. This group played North American music but lacked a trumpeter adept in jazz. Bauzá was determined to fill the trumpet chair and approached Lázaro Herrera, the trumpeter in the famed Septeto Nacional, for lessons. Bauzá learned quickly. After only a few weeks of diligent practice, and aided by his mastery of *solfège*, Bauzá became the band's trumpet soloist.<sup>50</sup> Yet Bauzá returned to the saxophone when he left Curbelo. At this time, Bauzá considered the trumpet as still an experiment.

#### "THE GREATEST LESSON THAT I EVER HAD" — BAUZÁ

Realizing that opportunities for playing jazz in Havana were limited, Bauzá decided to move to New York City to "improve" himself—to "reach the top"—as he later said.<sup>51</sup> The decision, of course, was inspired both by Bauzá's quest for musical excellence as well as by the opportunities available for blacks in cities in the northern United States. Large-scale northbound migration of African Americans had fomented a cultural and economic boom, of which the incarnation in New York became known as the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>52</sup> In 1930, Don Aziazpú's group left for New York. Although Bauzá was not a member of the band, he decided to accompany them on their voyage. In New York, African Americans had created vital black organizations in the face of overt racism. Because black musicians had been barred from joining the New York's musicians' union (Local 802), in 1910 James Reese Europe had organized an alternate organization called the Clef Club, for which the Rhythm Club on 131st Street in Harlem served as an informal gathering place. This was a private club for black musicians where members could relax, play pool or poker, simply chat, and especially make professional contacts. Jam sessions were held at the Rhythm Club, and Bauzá remembers hearing Art Tatum play there. At the Rhythm Club, Bauzá also met his Afro-Cuban

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46. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

47. Ibid.

48. The notion of a jazz tinge in Latin music was suggested to the author by Dominican master saxophonist Crispín Fernández.

49. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 141–43.

50. Lázaro Herrera, interview by the author; Acosta, *Del tambor al sintetizador*, 16.

51. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

52. See Lewis, *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*; Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*.

compatriot, flutist Alberto Socarrás, who had come to the United States in 1928. Socarrás was playing flute in a Broadway show called *Blackbirds*;<sup>53</sup> Socarrás already knew many of the best black musicians in New York and was well-placed to orient Bauzá.<sup>54</sup>

Bauzá sat in on jam sessions at the Rhythm Club and was offered a job playing at upscale private parties with the stride pianist “Luckey” Roberts, whose unique compositional style was notable for its Latin tinges.<sup>55</sup> Bauzá also worked with conductor Joe Jordan on the short-run 1931 Broadway show *Fast and Furious*.<sup>56</sup> Puerto Rican reedman Raymond “Moncho” Usera, who was working with bandleader Noble Sissle, used Bauzá as a substitute on several occasions.<sup>57</sup> This led Bauzá to a regular job with Sissle in 1932.<sup>58</sup> One of the most prominent bands of the day, Sissle’s group included top-flight musicians such as trumpeter Buster Bailey and saxophonist and clarinetist Sidney Bechet. (As the band’s featured artist, Bechet did not sit with the reed section, but played solos only.) Details of decorum and appearance were of the utmost importance in the classy Harlem venues, and Sissle inspected band members’ uniforms before they went on stage: collars had to be stiff, and patent leather shoes had to shine. Soon after Bauzá joined the group, Sissle embarked upon a tour of Europe, but Bauzá remained in New York. He had come to the United States to participate in Harlem’s vibrant music and culture, and even touring with such a great musician as Bechet ran contrary to that objective.<sup>59</sup> After Sissle’s band left for Europe, Bauzá worked with several groups, including those led by Sam Wooding in 1932<sup>60</sup> and, notably, by Eubie Blake.<sup>61</sup>

Don Aziazpú’s lead singer, Antonio Machin, started his own quartet in New York, and he was planning a recording but was in a bind: few musicians in the city could play *son* trumpet. When Bauzá said that he would like the job, Machin was surprised; Bauzá was known as a saxophonist, not a trumpeter. Whereas Bauzá’s first job as a trumpeter in Cuba had been a short-lived experiment, this time he decided to take the instrument seriously and make it his primary calling. His motivation was based upon his love of jazz: Louis Armstrong’s towering influence had rendered the Armstrong trumpet style virtually synonymous with hot improvisation. Bauzá later said that “I want[ed] to play like Louis Armstrong so bad I can taste it [*sic*].”<sup>62</sup> He added, “I fell in love with the trumpet . . . so I started learning all his solos” from records. Bauzá gave up playing the alto saxophone for the time being, going so far as to give his instrument to a friend.<sup>63</sup>

Bauzá was excited to play jazz trumpet and took a job as lead trumpeter with Hi Clark and his Missourians, even though he considered the group a “second rate band.” Clark was working at the famed Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. Drummer Chick Webb, whose band headlined at the Savoy, heard Bauzá with Clark. When a trumpet chair opened up in Webb’s band in 1933, Webb auditioned seven players and hired Bauzá. Although Bauzá sight read the first job proficiently, Webb asked him to attend a rehearsal after the show. When Bauzá got there, he was surprised to see no one else but Webb. Webb told him that they were going to work one-on-one, that he was going to help the Cuban musician with the interpretation of African American music. Bauzá

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53. Norton, *American Musical Theater*, 628–30.

54. Roberts, *The Latin Tinge*, 37.

55. *Ibid.*, 18.

56. Norton, *American Musical Theater*, 56–65.

57. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

58. *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Mario Bauzá.”

59. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

60. *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Mario Bauzá.”

61. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown; Mario Bauzá, interview by Aaron Levinson.

62. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

63. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown. Also see Mario Bauzá, interview by Aaron Levinson.

called this meeting, “the greatest lesson that I ever had in my life.”<sup>64</sup> Bauzá later remembered that Webb told him:

“Take such and such a number out.” I took the number out. He said: “Play.” He said: “Don’t phrase like that.” So he used to hum to me the way he want me to phrase. I try. “That’s it, keep going—no—don’t lose the idea. Like that. Do it like this.”<sup>65</sup>

Bauzá, who had been accustomed to success at all musical tasks, became discouraged, thinking that perhaps jazz was not his calling after all. He told Webb that maybe he was not the man for the job, but Webb disagreed: “You got what I need, and I got what you need. . . . You play all the notes beautiful, but something about [it] is missing in there. If you listen to me, you’re going to never regret it.”<sup>66</sup>

Bauzá read music well, but he had not been interpreting the music according to African American aesthetics. Jazz, of course, emphasizes beats two and four instead of one and three, and jazz swings in variable eighth note rhythms approximating triplets. Bauzá had not been “swinging.” Nevertheless, Bauzá’s classical background made him a valuable player for Webb, and Webb knew that Bauzá wanted to play jazz, so their union was symbiotic. This had not been the first time that such a union played itself out in African American music; Ruth Glasser points out that for some time, black bandleaders, most notably James Reese Europe, had used Latin-Caribbean players as “music-stand musicians” because they were good readers.<sup>67</sup> Training in European classical music was more readily available to people of color in Cuba and Puerto Rico than it was to African Americans,<sup>68</sup> and a confluence of vernacular and concert traditions characterized Latin-Caribbean players’ musicality. Webb made good use of Bauzá’s musical training; within a year, Webb asked Bauzá to serve as a “musical director” for the band.<sup>69</sup> For a youth who had traveled alone to a new country with hopes of playing a new kind of music, this was a dream come true. Bauzá later remembered: “I flipped, [thinking] oh my goodness, I made it!”<sup>70</sup>

The fact that Bauzá’s skills were as a reader and interpreter—skills culled from his classical background—is underscored by the fact that Webb counseled him to stick to this specialty rather than asserting himself as a soloist. Although Bauzá loved Louis Armstrong and was learning to play in that style, Webb advised him to avoid emulating the great black improvisers. Bauzá later remembered Webb saying: “Don’t try to do that hard stuff because you won’t out-do them. . . . Those white trumpet players, when they play jazz, like Red Nichols, and you say you like it, they play around the melody. That’s what I want you to do.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, while Bauzá has gone down in history as an architect of Afro-Cuban jazz, he is not known as an innovative improviser.

As leader of one of the top black bands of the period, Webb competed with Henderson and Ellington. Webb’s powerful drum set technique, combined with his band’s top soloists and formidable arrangements by Jimmy Mundy and Fletcher Henderson, made his group one of the most swinging in Harlem. Bauzá remembered hearing Webb’s and Benny Goodman’s groups at the Savoy Ballroom in “battles of the bands,” and he felt that Webb’s band won. Webb recorded Bauzá’s composition “Lona,” which showed off Bauzá’s light timbre on the solo trumpet.<sup>72</sup> In addition to working with Webb, Bauzá recorded regularly with New York Latin bands. Bauzá’s pay

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64. Mario Bauzá, interview by Aaron Levinson.

65. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts; punctuation by the author.

66. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown; Mario Bauzá, interview by Aaron Levinson; Padura Fuentes, *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*, 18.

67. Glassner, *Music is My Flag*, 64–72.

68. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 37, 55–56.

69. *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Mario Bauzá.”

70. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*



with Webb was about \$80 per week, and he could make additional money doing recordings. Earning more than most of his peers, Bauzá was a successful man.<sup>73</sup> However, in 1938 Bauzá had a disagreement with Webb's booking office, which led to his leaving the band.

After a three-month stint with Don Redman<sup>74</sup> and a one-month engagement with Fletcher Henderson, Bauzá joined the Cab Calloway band. Alberto Socarrás, whose band worked opposite Calloway at the Cotton Club, recommended Bauzá as a substitute for Calloway's lead trumpeter Doc Cheatham. This led, in 1939, to a permanent job, which lasted until 1941.<sup>75</sup> Calloway's was the most commercially successful black band of the time. Because Calloway paid more than anyone else, he was able to attract top players such as tenor saxophonist Chu Berry, bassist Milt Hinton, and drummer Cozy Cole. In spite of Calloway's emphasis on showmanship and a great popularity among whites, he had effective ways of maintaining self-respect: to avoid the indignities associated with traveling in the segregated South, for example, Calloway's group traveled by private rail car or charter bus; as one of his musicians put it, there was "no Jim Crow coach for Cab."<sup>76</sup> The philosophy of black self-help, perhaps inspired by Booker T. Washington, resonated with Bauzá's attraction to the economic and social opportunities available to blacks based in Harlem at the time: instead of looking to the white world for solutions, successful African Americans such as Calloway kept their dignity intact and their pocketbooks full by creating their own black organizations. Successful in the competitive world of black dance bands, Bauzá had triumphed in the United States and felt at home there to the extent that he now identified more closely with New York's black swing band scene than with its Latin music scene. In 1936, Bauzá had made a two-week visit to Cuba to marry Machito's sister Estella, and during this stay he told his friends about opportunities for blacks in New York. He encouraged Machito to begin saving money for the trip.<sup>77</sup>

## FROM BACKBEAT TO CLAVE

Bauzá met John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie (1917–1993) when Gillespie was working with Teddy Hill opposite Webb at the Savoy; Gillespie jammed with Webb and became friends with Bauzá.<sup>78</sup> While many seasoned musicians criticized Gillespie's unconventional playing, Bauzá loved his novel approach and sensed that Gillespie was destined to be an innovator. Bauzá thought Gillespie would make a valuable addition to Calloway's band, and went so far as to tell Calloway not only that he wanted Gillespie in the band but also that he believed that the band *needed* Gillespie.<sup>79</sup> Bauzá claimed that, in order to get his friend a foot in the door, Bauzá took a night off and asked Gillespie to substitute. He told trumpeter Lamar Wright to give Gillespie the lead part and to let him improvise.<sup>80</sup> He also coached Gillespie to play conservatively, telling him, "Don't go overboard."<sup>81</sup> As it turned out, Gillespie's solo accompanied a soft-shoe routine headlined by dancer Bill Robinson. Gillespie aced it, and within several weeks Calloway fired one of his trumpeters and asked Gillespie to join the band.<sup>82</sup> Bauzá remembered that during this period Gillespie had already earned his nickname

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73. Ibid.

74. *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Mario Bauzá."

75. Ibid.; Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

76. Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 107–08.

77. Salazar, "Machito, Mario, and Graciela," 26.

78. Ibid., 64.

79. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

80. Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 96.

81. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

82. Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 96.

by playing the clown.<sup>83</sup> Gillespie attested that joining Calloway was an important career move and that he became Bauzá's roommate and best friend in the Calloway band. Ever grateful for Bauzá's guidance, Gillespie wrote that "Mario was like my father."<sup>84</sup>

It was during his stint with Calloway that Bauzá began to think about wedding Cuban music to jazz. Remembering the lesson Chick Webb had given him on jazz phrasing, it occurred to Bauzá that he could likewise teach North American musicians to phrase in the Cuban idiom. In an illuminating anecdote, Bauzá later explained that Calloway's drummer Cozy Cole used to get bored between sets, and one day when he was practicing in the dressing room Bauzá said to him:

"Cozy, if I hum it to you some kind of rhythm do you think you can do it?" He said, "Well, I'll try it." So I hummed something, and "I said, no, no not like that, like [hums a phrase]." So I said let me get hold of Dizzy. So I said, "Dizzy, put a mute in the trumpet. He's going to play some rhythm in there and I want you to play something jazz in there on top." So he start the phrase and I say "no, no, stop, stop. Cuban music, the metric of the Cuban music is *clave* . . . so put the phrasing from upbeat to the downbeat." So Dizzy start playing on top of that rhythm. I said this is it already, I know what to do now. All I got to do now is take the tune and dress it, voice wide like a jazz band, with the same harmony, the same voicing and instruments. That's how the Afro-Cuban jazz [was] born.<sup>85</sup>

Bauzá's idea was not merely to superimpose jazz solos over Cuban rhythms. Rather, Bauzá wanted the jazz elements to be rhythmically consonant with the deep structure of Cuban music: performers should emphasize beats one and three instead of two and four, and they should refer to the *clave* rhythm. Bauzá's genius consisted in knowing his strengths as an artist. He combined his background as a "music-stand musician" versed in the interpretation of written parts, with his "greatest lesson," which was to differentiate jazz interpretation, based on swung eighth notes and emphasis on the "backbeat" (beats two and four) from *clave*'s downbeat emphasis.

Gillespie states in his memoirs that already in 1938 he wanted to incorporate more percussion into his music. Therefore, Gillespie was primed for the informal lessons on Afro-Cuban music that Bauzá offered while they worked with Calloway. Gillespie stated that when he started his own big band in 1947, "That was the first thing I thought of. I had to have a conga drummer."<sup>86</sup> He asked Bauzá to recommend someone, and Bauzá thought of Chano Pozo, who had recently arrived from Cuba. Pozo was a talented *conguero*, singer, dancer, and composer whose artistry was informed by his involvement with the Abakuá secret society. A fine dancer, Pozo gained attention with drum and dance routines that incorporated Afro-Cuban liturgical songs. He also composed songs that made creative use of wordplay. Based upon vocables, for example, his hit "Blen, blen, blen" outlines the *tresillo* part of the *clave* rhythm. The collaboration between Gillespie and Pozo was a microcosm of the mutually enriching interaction between Afro-Cuban and African-American musicians that took shape at mid-century, and had a lasting effect on American music. Gillespie later wrote of his collaboration with Pozo: "Since he couldn't speak English, people always asked, 'Well, how do you communicate?' 'Deehee no peek pani, me no peek Angli, bo peek African' ['Dizzy no speak Spanish, me no speak English, but we both speak African'], Chano would answer."<sup>87</sup> Gillespie developed into an acknowledged expert and innovator in Cuban music, widely known and respected in Latin music circles.<sup>88</sup> As Machito once

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83. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown; Mario Bauzá, interview by Aaron Levinson.

84. Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 115.

85. Mario Bauzá, interview by Aaron Levinson.

86. Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 115–16, 317.

87. *Ibid.*, 318.

88. Stearns, *The Story of Jazz*, 243–44, 249, 252; Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 75–77; Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 348–49.

remarked, “the marriage of Cuban music to jazz was not a conventional union; rather, it was a marriage of love.”<sup>89</sup> Bebop and Afro-Cuban jazz are best understood in relation to the contemporaneous discourse on Africa and jazz in politics, academia, and the arts,<sup>90</sup> and in relation to what cultural anthropologist J. Lorand Matory calls the “live dialogue” between various parts of the pan-African world.<sup>91</sup> With George Russell, Pozo and Gillespie co-composed “Cubano Be, Cubano Bop,” which Russell considered the first modal composition in jazz.<sup>92</sup> Gillespie and Pozo’s 1947 Carnegie Hall premiere of this two-movement work collectively dubbed the “Afro-Cuban Drums Suite” was compared to Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* by reviewers. Indeed, Gillespie and Pozo’s dissonant harmonies and emphasis on rhythm invited comparison to Stravinsky’s innovative work, and forged what Stewart calls “Afro-modernism,” featuring “abstraction and creative mobility” as tenets, and with Cuban elements as a central component.<sup>93</sup>

## WE COME FROM AFRICA

Machito arrived in New York in October 1937, staying in Harlem with Mario Bauzá and Estella. Like his brother-in-law, Machito was tremendously impressed by the accomplishments that African Americans were making in the northern United States at the time. As Machito later remembered: “It was a fertile time, when everybody was thinking about improving themselves. The black North Americans who were living in Harlem had already established themselves there. . . . I went to the Savoy every night.”<sup>94</sup> Machito soon was working with several New York Latin bands. While Machito’s musical experience in Cuba had been as a back-up singer in small *son* groups, he now had the opportunity to sing lead vocals in large dance bands. In 1938, Machito recorded with the preeminent bands of Xavier Cugat and Noro Morales.<sup>95</sup> In 1939, Machito worked with Orquesta Siboney directed by Alberto Iznaga, and in 1940 he took over the leadership of that band for a job at a new midtown nightclub called Club Cuba. Although the band’s engagement was short-lived, it was significant in that it marked the first time that Machito led a group in New York; the seeds of the Machito band had been planted.<sup>96</sup> Later in 1940, Bauzá and Machito decided to join forces. As they prepared for a collaborative venture, Bauzá, who still worked in his lucrative Calloway job, took charge of rehearsing Machito’s musicians.<sup>97</sup>

At the first rehearsal, Bauzá determined that some of the players Machito had chosen were not up to par, and he replaced them. Bauzá’s goal was to create a top-shelf band on the same level as the legendary Harlem swing bands: a Latin band with the polish, decorum, and musical excellence of Calloway and Ellington. Bauzá wanted a group that would appeal to dancers but that also could accompany shows. Sidemen remember Bauzá as an exacting bandleader, a “slave-driver” when it came to rehearsals. Bauzá was especially demanding in regard to interpretation and intonation.<sup>98</sup> Because Bauzá wanted to blend Cuban rhythms with jazz phrasing, he needed musicians who were open to new ideas. Thus, he sought not only top talent but flexible musicians

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89. *Machito, A Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Icarus Films, 1987), video-cassette (VHS).

90. García, “We Both Speak African,” 198; Monson, “Art Blakey’s African Disapora.”

91. Matory, “Afro-Atlantic Culture,” 44.

92. Chambers, *Milestones*, 279–80.

93. Stewart, “No Boundary Line to Art,” 333, 341.

94. *Machito, a Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Icarus Films, 1987), video-cassette (VHS).

95. Salazar, “Machito, Mario, and Graciela,” 26; Acosta, “Machito: Padre de jazz latino y la salsa,” 17.

96. Salazar, “Machito, Mario, and Graciela,” 27.

97. *Ibid.*, 27.

98. Leslie Johnkins, interview by David Carp.

willing to be molded and to work together as a team. There were many excellent Latin horn players in New York who could interpret Cuban music, but in addition to Latino players Bauzá used many North American musicians. Machito explained:

On account they was American, they knew they got to learn how to get adjusted with us. . . . A Spanish guy would have said, “No, [don’t tell me how to play] because I played with Coén, I played with Noro Morales, I played with Cugat.” We don’t want that. We want a guy who would pay attention to what we want. . . . There was a lot of musicians [*sic*] who could read, but . . . we were looking for people, for flexible people, that we could mold the way we want. . . . They don’t supposed to be the best musician [*sic*]. The most flexible was the one we was looking for.<sup>99</sup>

With their hand-picked players, Bauzá implemented Chick Webb’s lessons about phrasing—this time teaching Cuban rhythms—and the musicians responded robustly.<sup>100</sup>

While Bauzá and Machito sought flexibility in their horn players, they demanded percussionists who were versed in Afro-Cuban traditional music, and Machito was adept at attracting these players. The pianist and bassist needed to be well-rounded, with a mastery of Cuban rhythms and jazz harmony as well as solid sight-reading skills. (Notably, the Machito band did not use trombones.<sup>101</sup>) The band started with five horn players and a rhythm section of four. Along with Bauzá, Doc Cheatham played trumpet. The saxophone section consisted of Johnny Nieto and Freddy Skeritt on altos and José “Pin” Madera Mario on tenor. Bauzá switched from trumpet to lead alto saxophone when the band played slow tunes, or *boleros*, because Bauzá wanted a lush sound in these pieces. The pianist was Gilberto “Frank” Ayala (later replaced by Luis Varona, and then Joe Loco), and the bassist was Julio Andino. The rhythm section of the band would combine the *bongó* from the Cuban *son* group with the *timbales* from the *danzón*, just like other large Cuban dance bands in New York. Machito’s first *bongocero* was José “Bilingüe” García, who played for six months and was replaced for a short period by Chino Pozo,<sup>102</sup> until José “Buyú” Mangual joined and stayed until about 1960. The band’s first *timbalero* was Tony “Cojito” Escolies, a top-rated drummer known for his swinging style, but who could not read music. For this reason, Escolies was soon replaced by seventeen-year-old Tito Puente for a brief time, until Ubaldo Nieto joined the group and remained until about 1960. The *timbales* player also often switched to trap drums, especially when accompanying shows. New York dance bands eventually used the *conga* drum, but in 1940, it was generally reserved for street-level *rumba* and *comparsa* processions associated with carnival.<sup>103</sup> (Machito’s band added a *conga* player in 1942, see below.)

Bauzá opined that most Latin bands in New York during this period were “rinky-dink” affairs that lacked the harmonic sophistication and virtuosity to which he had become accustomed in Webb’s and Calloway’s bands. Determined to make Machito and his Afro-Cubans stand out from the crowd, Bauzá called on his contacts in the black swing world for arrangements and asked arranger John Bartee, who worked for Calloway, to arrange for Machito. Because Bartee had no expertise in Cuban music, Bauzá worked with him closely. While leaving the harmonizations to Bartee, Bauzá provided what he called “blueprints” that consisted of lead sheets augmented with instructions for introductions, and importantly, the bass parts that were central to the band’s style. On nights before rehearsals, Bauzá and Bartee sometimes stayed up long into the night to prepare the music. The resulting jazz arrangements gave the band a

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99. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

100. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

101. On rare occasions, for certain recordings, the band added trombones.

102. Chino Pozo was said to be related to Chano Pozo, but the verity of their familial ties has been questioned.

103. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts; Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 2001; José Madera, interview by the author.

modern sound, which, as Bauzá later expressed, appealed to young people in the United States. “The sound is familiar to them,” he said, “and it really moved them. It was a good combination.”<sup>104</sup>

Machito and Bauzá determined to call the band Machito and his Afro-Cubans. Bauzá later said that some “people didn’t want that title; the people say, why the ‘Afro?’ I said [that we used this name] because the music we represent come[s] from Africa, and we come from Africa.”<sup>105</sup> In naming their band, Machito and Bauzá made an ideological statement about pride and unity in the African diaspora. Open pride in African origins was still rare in the early part of the twentieth century, when Afro-Cubans and African Americans encountered each other as long-lost brothers and sisters after centuries of social rupture.

## BRING ON THE RUMBEROS!

Machito and his Afro-Cubans debuted at the Park Plaza-Palace Ballroom on 110th Street and Fifth Avenue on 3 December 1940.<sup>106</sup> Bauzá did not participate in the debut performance because he was still playing for Calloway. Bauzá joined the group several months later,<sup>107</sup> and one musician remembers that he “looked very professional, his whole attitude and everything, the way he walked, the way he spoke, and the way he tapped off the band . . . this guy knew what he was doing, definitely. And the band sounded marvelous. . . . I hadn’t seen that in a Latin band. I had seen that in . . . Duke and Basie and the rest of the bands. But in a Latin band I had never seen that type of professionalism.”<sup>108</sup>

Grassroots Afro-Cuban percussion and Machito’s brilliant improvised lyrics based on the traditional *son* and *rumba* style, called *inspiraciones*, were central to the band. Paradoxically, the Latin bands that played in Harlem at the time used less percussion than did the downtown society bands such as Xavier Cugat’s, which capitalized on flashy drumming displays.<sup>109</sup> The Machito band was innovative not only in its grounding in jazz but also in its foundation in *clave*-based percussion in the *son* and *rumba* traditions, something neither uptown nor downtown New York Latin bands did at the time. Machito’s formidable drummers, especially the *bongó* players, improvised profusely, riffing behind vocalists in the manner of the Cuban *son* sextets, which had been strongly influenced by *rumba* drumming. The *bongó* improvisations in the band’s 1941 recording of “Que vengan los rumberos,” (included in this edition) intertwine in kaleidoscopic counterpoint with Machito’s *inspiraciones*. Indeed, the song’s name, translatable as “Bring on the Rumberos!” (literally “Let the Rumberos Come”), epitomizes Machito’s percussion-based contribution, heralding the arrival of *clave* and traditional Afro-Cuban music to the United States.

Important in forging the band’s early style was the work of tenor saxophonist José “Pin” Madera, who arranged many of the band’s early hits, including “Que vengan los rumberos,” “Sopa de pichón,” “La paella,” “Hall of the Mambo King,” and the band’s first theme song—“Nagüe.” Madera was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico on 11 May 1911 into a respected family of musicians. His grandfather was a music teacher and his father, Simon Madera (1875–1957), was a violinist and the composer of the well-

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104. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts. Some have mistakenly assumed that Bauzá was an arranger; see Woolley, “The Spanish Tinge,” 9; Vásquez, *Listening in Detail*, 117.

105. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

106. The Park Plaza and the Park Palace were adjacent, affiliated clubs. Because oral testimony does not clarify precisely when Machito played in which venue, this text (following an approach developed by David Carp) treats the two clubs as an aggregate.

107. Salazar, “Machito, Mario, and Graciela,” 27–28.

108. Steve Berrios, interview by David Carp.

109. Glasser, *Music is My Flag*, 81.

known *danza* “Mis amores.” As a young man, Madera studied arranging and *solfege* with his father and developed into a fine performer on saxophone, clarinet, and flute. Madera moved to New York City in November 1930, settled in East Harlem, and worked as a reed player in pit orchestras, Latin bands (notably, those of Xavier Cugat and Noro Morales), and jazz groups (including Noble Sissle’s). He also arranged for various Latin dance bands. Madera played an important role in forging the Machito band’s original style.<sup>110</sup> He played with Machito throughout his career, passing away in 1991.

Machito and Bauzá established a good balance in their collaboration. For all of Bauzá’s importance as bandleader, Machito’s grounding in Afro-Cuban roots—his expertise as a *son* singer and *marquero*—was the band’s central attraction during its early years. As Bauzá himself admitted, his own background in classical music, the *danzón*, and jazz did not qualify him to discern the finer points of Afro-Cuban rhythm: “The *danzón* orchestra is a different metric.” Bauzá acknowledged that Machito knew “that side of the music better than me. He used to show how important the *clave* was in the music.” In fact, Machito judged whether arrangements written by North Americans adhered to the tenets of Afro-Cuban music. Bauzá once explained that Machito would often point to specific parts of arrangements, cautioning writers to “be careful with the *clave*.”<sup>111</sup> Until the advent of the Machito band, many Latin bands in the United States had been stylistically removed from Afro-Cuban roots, and Bauzá went so far as to claim that Machito “brought the *clave* to the United States.”<sup>112</sup>

The *inspiraciones* that Cuban singers improvise often comment on immediate concerns such as local people or current events. At the Park Plaza-Palace, Machito developed vocal improvisations into a song about *sopa de pichón*, or pigeon soup. The song was said to have a double meaning: *pichón* was a slang word for marijuana (or as Machito poetically put it, “that particular happy cigarette”).<sup>113</sup> He explained that this piece marked his first foray into songwriting, and that the tune’s original version paid homage to the popular and powerful individuals on the streets of Spanish Harlem: <sup>114</sup> “[Before this,] I never composed anything in my life. Never wrote anything. . . . I said to [pianist] Frank Ayala: ‘Okay. Get a vamp in D.’ So he start: bam barambam bam bi—[and I sang] ‘*tiene que tomarte una sopa de pichón*’ [‘you have to try pigeon soup’], and then start to improvise lyrics. . . . I used to mention in my inspiration[s] all the tough guys in the neighborhood, so that became a hit.”<sup>115</sup>

Machito’s use of slang and his appeal to the local big-shots reflected his grounding in the grassroots *barrio* scene. In keeping with this down-home flavor, Machito read-dressed culinary notions in another top number of the period, “La paella.” (In fact, Machito was an excellent cook.) Regarding “La paella,” Machito told the story of how his close friend and promoter, the Puerto Rican Federico Pagani “was walking out of a restaurant and we were talking and I say, ‘Federico, how are you?’ He said: ‘*Bueno*, I just had paella. Did you ever try paella before?’ You know, I got insulted. I said . . . ‘I know how to *make* paella. How you going to ask me if I ever taste it, a paella?’ So I went in the subway that particular day, it was a matinee at La Conga, and I wrote ‘La paella’ in the train.”<sup>116</sup> Machito’s spontaneity was a feature of the band’s style and appeal. He explained: “[If we] played ‘La paella’ now, and fifteen minutes from now we played ‘La paella’ again . . . it is another bash, because [it] depend[s] on the atmosphere, the

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110. Carp, “José Madera”; José Madera, Jr., interview by the author, New York, 2000.

111. Mario Grillo, interview by the author.

112. Medina, “Machito,” 16.

113. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

114. The recorded version of “Que vengan los rumberos” included in this edition uses different words from those of the original (unrecorded) improvised version.

115. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; punctuation by the author.

116. *Ibid.*

dance, the way I feel, the way the musicians feel. So this is not a machine or just a computer that you give it one information and it make a thousand cop[ies]; no, [with] my computer, you[re] going to have a different information every time that you hit the button.”<sup>117</sup>

In addition to working at the Park Plaza-Palace, Machito and his Afro-Cubans played in other uptown venues in Harlem and the Bronx, often booking jobs through Pagani. Pagani would rent a hall, leave the bar profits to the house, and take the cover charge for the band. Knowing that Machito would attract a large crowd, ballroom owners often sought the band. The group’s combination of traditional and new elements became a hit with working-class Latinos. As Bauzá said, Machito was “the king uptown.”<sup>118</sup>

## MACHITO GOES DOWNTOWN

Machito and his Afro-Cubans played their first “downtown” engagement outside the Latino community: a two-week matinee stint at the Beachcomber club, in December 1941.<sup>119</sup> As a result, Jack Harris, the owner of an elite club called La Conga on 51st Street and Broadway, asked Machito to substitute for his house band, which was led by Anselmo Sacassas. As mentioned above, stereotyped versions of the *son* (called rhumba) and the *conga* were becoming popular in New York,<sup>120</sup> and La Conga featured a Latin band for dancing and a group led by Harris himself that accompanied dance shows and comedians.<sup>121</sup> According to Bauzá, La Conga’s clientele consisted mostly of affluent Jewish Americans, many of whom worked in the fur trade.<sup>122</sup> Machito and his Afro-Cubans made a favorable impression on Harris, and in 1942 Harris offered the band a steady job.<sup>123</sup>

Harris’s own band was capable of accompanying shows, but it was a small group that lacked an original style. Harris, who was astute in business as well as music, decided to disband his own group and feature two Latin bands: Machito and his Afro-Cubans would be the headline act and play for shows and dancing, and José Curbelo’s group would play for dancing when Machito took breaks.<sup>124</sup> Machito and his Afro-Cubans began the evening’s entertainment with light dinner music. They continued with a few dance numbers, then accompanied a show that featured dancers and up-and-coming comedians such as Jackie Gleason and Dean Martin. After this, Curbelo’s band played for dancing, and then the two bands alternated dance sets. Therefore, Bauzá attained his goal of forging a band that, like the top Harlem groups, was rooted in dance music, yet was polished enough to accompany high-class shows.<sup>125</sup> As Bauzá later remembered, some of New York’s white Latin bandleaders had expected that Machito’s emphasis on black Cuban roots would preclude acceptance in swanky white downtown venues. But La Conga proved the naysayers wrong. “People said that my band would not work below 96th Street,” Bauzá recalled, “but after we subbed for Sacassas at La Conga, we stayed there three years.”<sup>126</sup>

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117. Ibid.

118. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

119. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

120. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 52, 62.

121. Max Salazar, interview by the author; Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

122. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

123. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

124. David Carp, personal communication with the author.

125. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts; Graciela, interview with Mario Bauzá and Graciela on WKCR-FM; David Carp, personal communication with the author.

126. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

As a result of this exposure, in 1942 Robbins Music began to publish Machito's songs, and Decca Records offered the band a recording contract. "Sopa de pichón," "La paella," "Nagüe," and "Que vengan los rumberos" were well-received in Cuba as well as in the United States Latin market. The band also recorded several sides accompanying the famed Cuban singer Migulito Valdés; these included "Eco" (a *son* invoking Afro-Cuban liturgical themes) and "El botellero" (which later served as the basis for Machito's second theme song, "Tanga").<sup>127</sup> The Valdés recordings sold well in Latin America because of the singer's great popularity and the high quality of the discs. Generally speaking, North American recordings during this period came to Cuba independent of radio stations, and they were often sold to owners of jukeboxes. Thus the Machito sides became hits on Cuban *Victrolas*, as jukeboxes were called in Cuba; a radio disc jockey recalled that Machito was "*un Victrolero por excelencia*" ("a *victrolero par excellence*").<sup>128</sup> Featuring their music published by Robbins Music, in 1942 Machito and his Afro-Cubans started broadcasting live coast-to-coast from La Conga. The band also broadcast a "Saludos Amigos" radio program designed to raise morale among Spanish-speaking troops during World War II.<sup>129</sup> In 1946, Machito was filmed performing "Tanga," "Tambo," and "Nagüe" for *A Night in the Tropics*, a film starring Betty Reilly. Although Machito's segment was not used in the film's final version, the footage was released as a short and shown in Latino community theaters.<sup>130</sup>

Machito and his Afro-Cubans also were adept at performing covers of songs then popular in the United States, once accompanying Billie Holiday and recording with Harry Belafonte in 1949.<sup>131</sup> Several Latin bands began to add Cuban rhythms to North American popular songs as Latin music caught on with white audiences. For example, former Machito pianist Joe Loco started his own band and gained fame with a Latinized version of "Tenderly" (1947). Machito also participated in this trend, recording "Donkey Serenade," "Tea for Two," and an entire LP of compositions by Irving Berlin.<sup>132</sup> Machito's best-selling record was a novelty number called "Asia Minor" that featured oboist Mitch Miller playing stereotyped "snake-charmer" music. The success of "Asia Minor" in 1949 led to a follow-up entitled "Oboe Mambo," which became popular in Cuba.<sup>133</sup> Like Ellington's version of the *Peer Gynt Suite*, "Hall of the Mambo King" (included in this edition) is a take-off on Edvard Grieg's famous piece. "Hall of the Mambo King" exemplifies José Madera's masterly orchestration and Bauzá's talent as a bandleader by juxtaposing the even eighth notes, downbeat phrasing, and *clave* of Cuban music (mm. 1–18) with the backbeat and swung eighth notes of jazz (mm. 19–26). "Hall of the Mambo King" features Leslie Johnakins on baritone saxophone (see mm. 57–73). Johnakins was often featured as soloist, and his importance as an improviser was perhaps overshadowed by the dominance on recordings of guest jazz soloists.<sup>134</sup> The baritone saxophone underscored the all-important bass figures in Machito's arrangements, which were influenced by conga parts in *rumba* and often articulated *clave*-based rhythmic cells. Johnakins remembers that the style was difficult to play at first: "I got confused with the rhythm. I was used to having one drum, and here I joined a band with three drums: a *conga* drum, a *bongó*, plus timbales,

127. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

128. Manuel Villar, interview by the author, Havana, Cuba, 2001.

129. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

130. Salazar, "Machito, Mario, and Marcielo." The Betty Riley short can be seen at "Machito and his Afro-Cuban Boys," YouTube, accessed 31 August 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mmVEWJJ\\_ZQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mmVEWJJ_ZQ).

131. Leslie Johnakins, interview by David Carp; Ray Santos, interview by David Carp; Harry Belafonte and Michael Shnayerson, *My Song: A Memoir*, 82.

132. Machito and His Orchestra, *Irving Berlin in Latin America*, Forum SF 9040, no date, LP.

133. Manuel Villar, interview by the author.

134. *Ibid.*



and then there was a bass and a piano. And you know, [with] the complicated rhythms of the Latin music, there's somebody hitting on every beat, and I didn't—couldn't—find which beat was the one *I* was supposed to hit on [laughs]!"<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, Johnakins became a master of interpreting the *clave*-based baritone parts and played a central role in forging the Machito sound.

The Afro-Cubans were the first band in New York regularly to include the *conga* drum, first using it in 1942. Until early the 1940s, this instrument, known as *tumbadora* in Cuba, was not generally used in dance bands. Several bandleaders in Cuba, most notably the influential Arsenio Rodríguez, began to incorporate it in an affirmation of black Cuban street culture. This innovation soon caught on. The incorporation of this drum into dance bands dovetailed with the popularity of the conga dance. Before its use as a regular part of the percussion section, the *quinto*, a small *conga* drum, was sometimes used as a sort of prop in stereotyped *conga* dance shows (Desi Arnaz used a *quinto* while singing "Babalú" on the *Lucy* show). Riding such stereotypes, Machito and his Afro-Cubans first used the *conga* during their engagement at La Conga. However, they transcended the stereotype because they utilized the instrument in the manner introduced by Arsenio Rodríguez, which builds on its basis in *rumba* style rather than in stereotyped conga performances. The addition of this drum to the *son* added a heaviness—a grounded funkiness—that black Cubans loved, and which hearkened to grassroots culture identified with the *rumba*. Carlos Vidal was Machito's first *conguero*, and later top *congueros* in the band included Luis Miranda, Patato Valdéz, and Candido Camero.<sup>136</sup>

## GRACIELA

Machito's younger foster sister Felipa Graciela Pérez Gutiérrez, known professionally simply as Graciela, was born in 1915 in Havana. She showed musical talent as a child, and like many young girls studied piano and *solfege*, although her predilection was for singing popular songs. To assist her career, Machito used his contacts with Havana's top musicians, recommending her as a singer and *clave* player to the famed all-woman Sexteto Anacaona (named for a legendary queen of the Taínos, the indigenous Caribbean inhabitants). Thus, at age sixteen, Graciela already was performing with one of Cuba's best groups, remaining with Anacaona from 1933 to 1942. When she joined, Anacaona was a *son* group, but it later evolved into a *charanga* (or string and flute-based ensemble specializing in the *danzón*), and then into a dance band with brass and reed instruments. (Graciela even played string bass with Anacaona for a short time.) Anacaona also played popular songs from the United States. In addition to enjoying a high profile in Cuba, the group toured to Puerto Rico, Panama, Mexico, Venezuela, and New York City. In 1938, the Anacaona band played in Paris at the Cabaret Havana-Madrid opposite French guitarist and composer Jean "Django" Reinhardt—it was there that Graciela played bass.

When Machito was drafted into United States military service in 1943, the band needed a replacement vocalist, so Bauzá hired one of the best Latino singers in New York, the Puerto Rican Polito Galíndez. Bauzá also invited Graciela to join the band. Graciela was a fine singer, versed in up-tempo dance numbers as well as boleros; her performance is featured on "Caso perdido" in this volume. Indeed, Graciela was a more versatile singer than Galíndez or even Machito himself, who was not a bolero specialist. Like her brother, Graciela was grounded in Afro-Cuban culture and had mastered the intricacies of *clave*; she played *claves* in the Anacaona band. Machito stayed in the

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135. Leslie Johnakins, *Machito, a Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Ircarus Films, 1987), videocassette (VHS).

136. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

United States Army for less than a year, receiving an honorable discharge after suffering an accident during target practice in basic training. When Machito returned, Galíndez left the band but Graciela remained. Machito and his Afro-Cubans now had a sibling team of lead singers, each with a highly individual style.<sup>137</sup>

Graciela's most requested songs were such witty numbers as "Juanita y José," which recounts neighborhood gossip, and "Esto es lo último" (renamed "¡Sí, Sí, No, No!" in the Machito band's version), which features an introduction where Graciela repeats "¡Sí!, ¡No!" and other refrains, including "¡Que lo tengo en la chi-chi!" ("I have something in my chi-chi!") intoned in a sexy and provocative vocal tone. When the band recorded this song in Mexico, producers asked them to remove the "chi-chi" reference, because in Mexico the term refers to a woman's breasts. Graciela countered that in Cuban Spanish "chi-chi" is used by children to refer to the head, and that she had originally interjected the word into the song when her head was cold after arriving at La Conga during New York's severe winter months. Nevertheless, the sexy subtext of "¡Sí, sí!" is undeniable; double *entendres* of this sort had long been a staple of Cuban popular music.<sup>138</sup> Graciela was supremely versatile, adept in boleros, phrasing the *son*, and the *clave*. In fact, her *clave* playing made her a harbinger of this central element of Afro-Cuban music in the United States alongside Machito. Graciela also had a strong feeling for jazz phrasing, and recorded an innovative piece called "U-Bla-Du," replete with supremely entertaining scatting that blended Cuban and bebop styles. Graciela worked with Machito and Bauzá throughout her life, and she passed away in 2010.<sup>139</sup>

## "TANGA"

Machito's first theme song, Chano Pozo's composition "Nagüe," opened and closed sets in the band's early days. However, in 1943 they adopted a new theme, "Tanga" (included in this edition), which has been touted as the "first Afro-Cuban jazz composition."<sup>140</sup> The origin of "Tanga" is vague. An oft-told story recounts that during a break at La Conga while Machito was in the Army, the pianist Luis Varona started playing a vamp from the introduction to "El botellero," which the band had recently recorded with Miguelito Valdés. Bassist Julio Andino joined in and the catchy sound caught Bauzá's attention. The next day, at the band's rehearsal at the Park Plaza-Palace, Bauzá asked the musicians to replicate what they had done the night before. Bauzá aurally dictated horn parts and created a texture with modernistic chord extensions manifesting in a pyramidal manner in the saxophone section (see mm. 7–22). He asked some of the band's African American musicians to improvise jazz solos over this pattern. The blend of Afro-Cuban rhythms and African American jazz improvisation exemplified Bauzá's "greatest lesson" and built on the experiments he had carried out with Gillespie in Cab Calloway's band.<sup>141</sup>

As for the tune's name, musicologist Max Salazar says that the Puerto Rican songwriter Pedro Flores heard an early performance and remarked that the sound was "as exciting [as] a *tanga*," which he claimed to be an "African" word for marijuana.<sup>142</sup>

137. Graciela, interview on WKCR-FM; Max Salazar, interview by the author; Mario Grillo, interview by the author, New York, 2000; Alvarez Peraza, "A César lo que es de César, y a Graciela—el bolero!"; Cano Guayo, "Graciela: comienzo como profesional"; Vázquez, *Listening in Detail*.

138. Graciela, interview on WKCR-FM.

139. Ben Ratliff. "Graciela Pérez-Gutierrez [*sic*], Afro-Cuban Singer, Dies at 94." *New York Times*, accessed 18 September 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/09/arts/music/09graciela.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/09/arts/music/09graciela.html?_r=0).

140. Salazar, "Machito, Mario, and Graciela," 25–29.

141. Machito, interview by Max Salazar. Machito made many recordings of "Tanga." To illustrate the band's spontaneity, this edition includes a transcription of a live performance.

142. Max Salazar, interview by the author; I have been unable to trace a reliable etymology for this word.

When Machito returned from military service he developed a set of improvised lyrics based on the interjection “¡Machito llegó!” (“Machito is here!”) inserted between chorus statements of “¡tanga!” Machito often introduced the piece with the vocal interjection “‘boru ‘buya,” a contraction of the Yorubá-Cuban greeting “*ibo rú di (i)‘bo ye*,” routinely bestowed upon high priests, or babalawo in Cuba. The phrase’s literal meaning is: “The sacrifice that is carried becomes the sacrifice that is suitable.”<sup>143</sup> “Tanga’s” melding of jazz with an Afro-Cuban liturgical reference epitomized Machito’s vision of Afro-diasporic unity.

According to baritone saxophone player Leslie Johnakins, “Tanga” was prominent in the band’s repertoire when he joined Machito in November of 1945. That the piece was played strictly by ear presented problems for new musicians joining the band: each player already knew what he was supposed to play, but no one could teach new players their parts. As a result, Bauzá asked René Hernández to notate “Tanga.” Johnakins remembers: “As new men come in . . . we were beginning to have problems playing our own theme song. So [laughs], Mario had René write it down. And he even come to me and ask me, ‘At this spot what note were you playing? And what beat did you hit on when you just’—and I told him. And do you know, he put it down verbatim on paper.”<sup>144</sup> The musicians were so accustomed to playing “Tanga” by ear, however, that they were hard-pressed to capture its feeling from written music. Bauzá decided that it was best to continue performing it by ear: “We be looking at it on the paper, we couldn’t play it [laughs]! It sounds unusual . . . [but] trying to play that, what is written, and still inject the feeling that you know you had over the years from playing it repetitiously—it didn’t make it. So he just took the arrangement out of the book, threw it away, and said we’d do better without music!”<sup>145</sup>

Bauzá himself published “Tanga” with Robbins Music,<sup>146</sup> but some charge that because others played important roles in its genesis, Bauzá did not have a legitimate claim to authorship. One long-time band member believes that “Tanga” was the brain-child of Machito’s saxophonist Johnny Nieto.<sup>147</sup> Curiously, in his many interviews, Bauzá himself never recounted the commonly-told anecdote about the genesis of “Tanga” as described above, while Machito did. But according to this very story, Machito was not present when “Tanga” was created, but was in the Army. One thing is clear, however: “Tanga” was forged aurally and collaboratively. Like many bandleaders in both Cuba and the United States, Bauzá worked by ear, adapting the ideas of sidemen. Ray Santos remembers that “this was part of Machito’s style, of Mario Bauzá’s style: head arrangements: He’d dictate riffs to the brass, the saxophones right on the bandstand.”<sup>148</sup> Duke Ellington also worked this way: Unclear authorship comes with the territory of aural tradition.

“Tanga” served as the theme for Machito’s live radio broadcasts from La Conga on radio station WOR and gained a large audience.<sup>149</sup> Although “Tanga” includes a vocal section, it is primarily an instrumental piece that features jazz solos; the foregrounding of jazz no doubt contributed to its attraction to white audiences. Recognizing the commercial viability as well as the artistic merit of Cuban bebop (or Cubop), jazz impresario Norman Granz signed Machito and his Afro-Cubans to a recording contract with Mercury Records. The first studio recording of “Tanga, Parts One and Two,” in 1948, features Flip Phillips as guest tenor saxophone soloist. In 1949, Granz recorded

143. Mason, *Orin Òrìsà*, 397.

144. Leslie Johnakins, interview by David Carp.

145. Leslie Johnakins, interview by David Carp; spelling and punctuation by the author.

146. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 70. These were copyright filings rather than publications of sheet music.

147. Johnny Nieto was timbalero Ubaldo Nieto’s brother; Anonymous, personal communication.

148. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp; punctuation by the author.

149. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 67.

“Tanga” again, this time for Verve Records, which he owned. While the “Tanga” studio recordings featured prominent guest soloists, the band members, especially baritone saxophonist Leslie Johnkins, were featured in live performances. “Symphony” Sid Torin, a famous jazz disc jockey, was impressed when he heard Machito play “Tanga” with soloists trumpeter Howard McGee and tenor saxophonist Brew Moore at the Apollo in 1948. He arranged for the band to record a new tune based on a similar idea, arranged by René Hernández, on Symphony Sid’s Roost Records. Because of contractual conflicts, the band recorded under the name Howard McGee and his Cuboppers. Even more bop oriented than “Tanga,” “Cubop City, Parts One and Two” signaled a major musical innovation in its seamless blending of modern jazz improvisation with Cuban rhythms.<sup>150</sup>

#### RENÉ HERNÁNDEZ (1914–1977)

Many American musicians were drafted into the military during World War II, and it became difficult for Bauzá to find players. Especially hard to fill was the piano spot, which required expertise in Afro-Cuban rhythms, jazz harmonies, and sight-reading. When pianist Joe Loco was drafted in 1945, Bauzá sent to Cuba for René Hernández, who became an important member of Machito and his Afro-Cubans, making an indelible mark on the band as both a pianist and arranger.

Alejandro René Hernández was born to a musical family on 3 June 1914 in Cienfuegos, Cuba. His father was a bandleader, and his brother was one of the top trumpeters in Cuba. In addition to music, Hernández learned the art of barbering. He moved to Havana as a teen and developed into a fine pianist and arranger by working with several top dance bands.<sup>151</sup> Hernández was recommended to Bauzá as one of the finest pianists in Cuba, so in 1945 Bauzá invited him to come to New York. Although hired as a pianist, Hernández soon became the Machito band’s principal arranger. Because of his expertise with Cuban rhythms, Hernández wrote most of the Afro-Cubans’ dance music, while Arturo “Chico” O’Farrill, with his sophisticated harmonic sense, handled *boleros* and suites.<sup>152</sup> Bauzá and Machito always had advised North American arrangers about the exigencies of *clave*, but they did not have to do so with Hernández. Bauzá recalled that he told Hernández: “I ain’t going to tell you what to write. You write, that’s all. I used to do that with Bartee and all those guys because they didn’t know that work, no, but you, you do what you want.”<sup>153</sup> Fellow arranger Ray Santos declared Hernández “the most *clave* arranger I’ve ever come across.”<sup>154</sup>

Hernández was a largely self-taught composer and arranger whose sensitive ears guided his exploration of the new sounds he encountered in New York. Hearing jazz both in clubs and on the radio, he was said to have absorbed its influences like a sponge.<sup>155</sup> Hernández arrived in the United States at an auspicious time; the year 1945 was the height of the bebop movement as well as the dawn of the *mambo* explosion. As Santos put it: “You had like two revolutions going on at the same time, one in Afro-Cuban music and one going on in jazz, and they both, like, met head-on and absorbed each other.”<sup>156</sup> Santos remembered Hernández taking in the new influences: “Machito’s band [was] alternating with Bud Powell. So, you know, René would be sitting next to him, watching his hands, you know, picking up on the harmonies and all

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150. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 78; Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 75–76.

151. Carp, “René Hernández”; Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

152. Leslie Johnkins, interview by David Carp.

153. Mario Bauzá, interview on WKCR-FM.

154. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

155. *Ibid.*

156. *Ibid.*

that. Because René had great ears. Yeah, he could pick up anything. Good ears, plus he was creative—good tasty creativeness.”<sup>157</sup> Thus, Hernández was primed to expand the conventions of Cuban dance music.<sup>158</sup> He employed a keen sense of critical judgment in his use of jazz; instead of incorporating all aspects of the new language, he filtered in the aspects that he felt would mix best with Afro-Cuban music.

The bass parts of Cuban dance music, intricately hooked into the percussion section, imbue each arrangement with a characteristic “feel” or kinetic motion, and Hernández was a master composer of bass parts. Bauzá believed that creativity with bass parts was what distinguished Hernández’s arrangements from most other Cuban and salsa arrangements. Bauzá was quoted as saying that Hernández “didn’t write anything before he had the bass line. The bass line is the most important thing in Cuban music.”<sup>159</sup> Like Madera, Hernández often gave bass patterns to the baritone saxophone; this practice was picked up by other arrangers and eventually became standard in *salsa*.<sup>160</sup> The addition of a baritone saxophone was innovative for Cuban bands, which usually used only altos and tenors; the baritone changed the color of the ensemble and intensified the bass part, which was foregrounded as the soul of the band’s rhythm. Therefore, baritone saxophonist Leslie Johnakins’ long-time membership in the band and René Hernández’s baritone-heavy arrangements made a lasting contribution to the style and orchestration of Latin dance music.<sup>161</sup> In Cuba, Hernández had written for smaller bands with perhaps two trumpets and three saxophones. For Machito’s band, Hernández wrote for a larger group, and the enlarged palette stimulated his creativity. Cuban jazz-tinged dance bands like Orquesta Casino de la Playa and Julio Cueva’s group employed four-part block harmony in the saxophones, but avoided the modernistic harmonies of bop. As the Afro-Cubans grew in number, Hernández rewrote their arrangements, transferring them from the original scoring for three or four saxophones and two trumpets into formats that used four or five saxophones and four trumpets.<sup>162</sup> Having a baritone saxophone—played by such a top-notch musician as Johnakins—particularly expanded the sonic possibilities and made possible larger and more open voicings.

Hernández’s friends knew him as a happy person. Ray Santos felt that “you can actually hear this in his music: he’s a happy writer, yeah. His arrangements, his riffs, everything sounds happy.”<sup>163</sup> In addition to arranging, Hernández composed many original pieces for the Afro-Cubans. One of Hernández’s most extraordinary qualities as an arranger was his ability to remain fresh, to keep thinking of new ideas in spite of the large amount of work he produced. Hernández’s creativity was put to good use in the Machito band. His diverse contributions ranged from percussion-driven vocal numbers to smooth instrumentals that pleased dancers, and novelty numbers such as the pop-orientalist hits “Asia Minor” and “Oboe Mambo.” Hernández took advantage of his versatility by writing for several other bands, and emerged as the dominant force in New York Latin arranging in the 1940s and 1950s. Santos compared Hernández’s writing for vocalist Vicentico Valdés to the arranger Nelson Riddle’s collaboration with Frank Sinatra.<sup>164</sup> All of Tito Rodríguez’s early hits (with a three-trumpet *conjunto*) were arranged by Hernández.<sup>165</sup> Hernández also made *conjunto* arrangements for bandleader Eddie Palmieri, including the arrangements for his Grammy Award-

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157. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 1999.

158. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

159. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown.

160. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

161. *Ibid.*

162. *Ibid.*

163. *Ibid.*

164. *Ibid.*; Carp, “René Hernández.”

165. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 2001; Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

winning 1974 LP entitled *The Sun of Latin Music*.<sup>166</sup> As Bauzá explained, Hernández maintained different styles for each group: “You [know], one thing about René, he had such a talented [way] that he [could] make arrangement[s] for each different artist in their own style. Because some guys they just write the same way for everybody—not René. René write [*sic*] for Vicentico [Valdés] . . . it sounds like one way. [He] used to write for Panchito Rizet, was another world. Write for Machito it was another world.”<sup>167</sup>

Hernández’s inventive facility as an arranger astounded his peers, who remember him writing while he sat at the Palladium bar or while riding on the subway.<sup>168</sup> He had his own mode of operation. Whereas most people in the music business relied on the telephone to get work, Hernández set up his apartment on 76th Street near Riverside Drive without a phone because calls distracted him. When people wanted to hire him, they either contacted Bauzá, who would speak to Hernández, or directly approached Hernández during performances.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, Hernández was a formidable pianist. Many pianists in New York could play Cuban dance music, but Hernández’s facility with Cuban rhythms, combined with his sight-reading skill, distinguished him from his peers. As a solo improviser, his playing was rhythmically clean with tinges of jazz that exuded a solidly Cuban sound as illustrated in his obligati in “Caso perdido,” included in this edition (mm. 33–39 and 60–75).<sup>170</sup>

In 1965 Hernández left Machito to become the pianist for Tito Rodríguez. Then, when Rodríguez settled in Puerto Rico, Hernández followed him there and played both in Rodríguez’s big band and in duo settings with the singer. Hernández also performed with the San Juan Caribe Hilton House show orchestra, and for a time led his own band. Hernández died of a heart attack in Puerto Rico in December 1977.<sup>171</sup> His influence on music is immeasurable; Bauzá went so far as to say that Hernández was “the greatest arranger of Cuban music I ever knew.”<sup>172</sup>

## BEBOP, CLAVE, AND “MANGO MANGÜÉ”

By the mid-1940s, Afro-Cuban music was gaining prominence in the United States. Machito’s friend, deejay and music publisher Fred Robbins, liked Latin music but was afraid that Spanish vocals would fail to attract white audiences. Afro-Cuban jazz, however, was predominantly instrumental and thus well-suited for his radio program. Machito appeared on Robbins’s show several times to publicize the new Cubop sound and soon, the Afro-Cubans were playing at New York jazz venues such as the Royal Roost, Birdland, Bop City, The Clique, and the Apollo Theater. Preeminent jazz soloists such as Charlie Parker, Dexter Gordon, Zoot Sims, Brew Moore, Johnny Griffin, or Stan Getz often appeared with them.<sup>173</sup> Similarly, Machito’s percussionists José Mangual, Carlos Vidal, and Patato also informally sat in with jazz musicians at bebop jam sessions in clubs such as the famed Minton’s Playhouse.

The prominent jazz bandleader Stan Kenton developed an interest in Afro-Cuban music, saying that while jazz had much to offer harmonically, Cuban music was richer rhythmically. He suggested that North American musicians avail themselves of this

166. Graciela, interview on WKCR-FM; Carlos de León, personal communication with the author.

167. Mario Bauzá, interview on WKCR-FM.

168. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp; Mario Bauzá, interview on WKCR-FM.

169. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

170. *Ibid.*; Chico O’Farril, interview by the author, New York, 2000; Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

171. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 2000; Ray Santos, interview by David Carp; Carp, “René Hernández.”

172. Figueroa, “René and Peruchín,” 25.

173. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 1999; Ray Santos, interview by David Carp; Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 81.

musical resource.<sup>174</sup> Teaming up with Machito's percussion section in December 1948, Kenton recorded his own arrangement of "The Peanut Vendor" (originally "El manicero"), and also recorded, as a tribute to the Afro-Cubans, a tune called "Machito."<sup>175</sup> Kenton's "The Peanut Vendor" featured Carlos Vidal on conga, José Mangual on *bongó*, and Machito on maracas. The arrangement combines touches of Brazilian acoustic guitar played by Laurindo Almeida with the tune's catchy theme couched in exciting, dissonant harmonies.<sup>176</sup> After the recording, Vidal joined Kenton's band as a featured soloist, fulfilling the role that Pozo played in Gillespie's band.<sup>177</sup> Bauzá applauded Kenton's efforts, but felt that the result failed to capture the Afro-Cuban "nitty-gritty," going so far as to claim that Kenton was essentially a "modern version of Paul Whiteman."<sup>178</sup> Still, Kenton's innovative experiments applying a bold new style of big band writing to Cuban rhythms broke new ground musically.

On 20 December 1948, producer Norman Granz recorded Charlie Parker and tenor saxophone player Flip Phillips with Machito and his Afro-Cubans. Granz suggested that the band record "El manicero," because it was the best-known Cuban song in the United States at the time. When the band played the song for Parker to see how he liked it, the alto saxophonist felt that the song's idiosyncratic syncopation, which outlines the *clave*-related *cinquillo* rhythm, would be too difficult for him to negotiate as a soloist. At first, Bauzá could not understand why Parker would hesitate to play what most Cubans considered a bare-bones simple tune. Later, Bauzá realized that while the *cinquillo* rhythm was natural to Cubans, it embodied a subtle logic difficult for non-Cubans to grasp. Nevertheless, Bauzá thought highly of Parker for recognizing the rhythm's complexities.<sup>179</sup>

After Parker nixed "El manicero," the band played the instrumental version of "Mango mangüé," which René Hernández had arranged to feature Graciela's vocals. Parker listened, and the song piqued his interest. They played the song again, and Parker improvised along, paraphrasing the vocal part. As Machito remembered:

We played ["Mango mangüé"] once, he says: "Play again." He put together his instrument and he played all through the arrangement, like he know that number for twenty years. . . . That fellow had a photograph[ic memory], a machine in his brain. . . . He was thinking ahead maybe ten, fifteen, twenty bars, with ideas.<sup>180</sup>

But, Parker remained humble. Machito remembers him saying that "I could do better than that, let's play [it] again. . . . Forgive me."<sup>181</sup> In the first section of the recording, Parker paraphrased the melody, following the arrangement's twists, turns, and Cuban signature rhythms with characteristic bebop flights. In the second section, he soloed over the tune's *montuno* (vamp).

In addition to "Mango mangüé" (included in this edition), the Granz recording session produced "Okidoke," "Repetition," and "No Noise, Parts One and Two," all arranged by John Bartee.<sup>182</sup> Once during a break in the recording session, Parker improvised while *bongó* player Chino Pozo vocalized drum syllables. Unfortunately, this spontaneous experiment was not recorded, but it served as the basis for a later Machito recording entitled "Bucabú," which featured tenor saxophonist Flip Phillips

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174. "Band of the Year," 46.

175. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

176. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 74.

177. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

178. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

179. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

180. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

181. *Ibid.*

182. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

improvising while Machito's percussionists vocalized Afro-Cuban drum patterns.<sup>183</sup> Later, Parker recorded two LPs with Machito's rhythm section: *South of the Border* (released 1952 and including the Granz tracks) and *Fiesta* (released 1957), which featured both Brazilian and Cuban numbers.

A central paradox of the African diaspora is that while its constituent peoples—ranging from African Americans to Afro-Cubans, Jamaicans, Afro-Peruvians, and others—diverge in many ways, they also have much in common. Issues of Afro-diasporic continuity and divergence came to a head in the critical reception of Cubop. Ethnomusicologist John Storm Roberts writes that some of Charlie Parker's solos with Machito were not successful aesthetically, and that Parker's improvisatory figures were out of sync with the *clave* rhythm.<sup>184</sup> Other experts concur that several pieces on the *South of the Border* and *Fiesta* albums sound rhythmically stilted.<sup>185</sup> Although Bauzá felt that jazz soloists usually worked well with the band, Bauzá recalled some exceptions. For example, Bauzá said that Harry "Sweets" Edison, who was asked to play on Machito's *The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*, excused himself, saying: "This is not my game."<sup>186</sup> And in Bauzá's view, drummer Buddy Rich, who participated in the recording of the same *Suite*, was not attuned to the *clave* rhythm.<sup>187</sup> Bauzá also remembered that alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, who later became a regular member of the group, abruptly ended his first attempt to play with the Afro-Cubans, feeling that he had not yet mastered the band's style. Konitz, however, later overcame his reluctance and became a regular member of the Machito band.<sup>188</sup>

In this light, the aborted "El manicero" session with Parker is noteworthy. Bauzá believed that Parker refused to record this tune precisely because it insistently emphasizes *clave* in a way that was impossible for Parker to elide, but Santos, Roberts, and most fans agree that Parker sounded rhythmically locked-in on "Mango mangüé."<sup>189</sup> Even when Parker's solos did not refer to *clave*, the metronomic drive shared by African American and Afro-Cuban musics facilitated the fusion.<sup>190</sup> This demonstrates why Bauzá called Hernández "the most *clave* arranger" of them all.<sup>191</sup> Note the *clave*-based rhythms in "Mango mangüé," for example measures 7–9, 31–32, 43–44, and 47–48. Even spots such as measures 1–2 and 11–12 imply the *clave* without explicitly stating it. Parker's solo, based upon the back-beat phraseology of bebop, never articulates *clave*-related rhythms, but nevertheless forges a seamless union with the arrangement (see mm. 60–61 and 83–84). At measure 143, Parker embarks on a series of soloistic comments in dialogue with the *clave* as articulated in the chorus refrain. Arranger Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill opined that, while Parker remained humble when he encountered Cuban style, "when you listen to it, you know it is *his* music."<sup>192</sup> Bauzá stated that the collaboration imparted the feeling you get when "you put your key in your door . . . [and] you in home [*sic*]."<sup>193</sup> Combining the inspired solo work by bebop pioneer Charlie Parker with the rhythmically impeccable "clave-logic" of Hernández's arranging, "Mango mangüé" is perhaps the most dazzling piece included in this edition.

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183. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

184. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 79, 91.

185. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 2001.

186. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

187. *Ibid.*

188. *Ibid.*

189. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 1999; Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 79, 91.

190. Waterman, "African Influence on the Music of the Americas."

191. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

192. Chico O'Farrill, interview by the author, New York, 2000.

193. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.



## CHICO O'FARRILL AND THE AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ SUITE

On 11 February 1949, Machito and his Afro-Cubans performed in a Norman Granz production at Carnegie Hall, sharing the stage with such luminaries as Duke Ellington and Lester Young. Slated to solo with the band on “Tanga,” Charlie Parker did not show up for the performance, so Granz substituted Sonny Stitt.<sup>194</sup> To commemorate the performance, Granz released an LP entitled *The Jazz Scene* that featured the music of all of the concert’s participants and photos of the bands. Machito and his Afro-Cubans’ participation in this prestigious project demonstrates the recognition of their important place in North American music. Machito and his Afro-Cubans began to play regularly in the Jazz at the Philharmonic concert series organized by Granz, who wanted Machito’s band to record a multi-movement work that would feature guest soloists Charlie Parker and Flip Phillips. Arturo “Chico” O’Farrill, a young Cuban arranger who lived in New York and who was swiftly ascending the jazz ranks by writing for Benny Goodman and others, was enlisted to write the *The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*.

Arturo “Chico” O’Farrill Theye was born in Havana on 28 December 1921 to well-to-do parents of Irish and German extraction; his father was an attorney employed by the government, and the family owned land in the countryside. Many affluent Cuban parents sent their sons abroad for high school, and the O’Farrills had a special incentive to do so because of their son’s habitual truancy in junior high. It was decided that a regimented environment would help the boy, and he was sent to the Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, Georgia. There, O’Farrill’s roommates enjoyed listening to the top dance bands of the day on the radio, and he became a jazz fan. He took up the trumpet, and in his senior year impressed friends by performing Bunny Berigan’s solo on “Marie” note-for-note. O’Farrill studied jazz arranging on his own, and he made an arrangement for the school band of “Tuxedo Junction.” When Cab Calloway came to Gainesville to perform, O’Farrill heard that there was a Cuban in the band, and he met Mario Bauzá.

After graduating from the Riverside Academy, O’Farrill returned to Cuba to fulfill his family’s expectations and follow in his father’s footsteps by studying law. However, O’Farrill’s heart was in jazz. O’Farrill had become familiar with the Cuban dance bands during his breaks from school when he went back to Cuba, and he played weekend gigs and dedicated himself to music. He had found a new circle of friends in Cuba—jazz lovers—and with them he listened to recordings and attended jam sessions.<sup>195</sup>

O’Farrill developed as an improviser, and increasingly became interested in arranging and composing. He began to take private composition lessons with Félix Guerrero, the dean of Cuban arrangers who also had taught bandleader Pérez Prado. Guerrero was a forward-thinking arranger who later in 1947 was to study with Nadia Boulanger,<sup>196</sup> and he reportedly mingled with the likes of Stravinsky and Gershwin.<sup>197</sup> O’Farrill became enamored of modernistic European classical music, once saying that “[o]ne of my greatest influences was Stravinsky and his compositions *Petrushka* and the *Rite of Spring*.”<sup>198</sup> O’Farrill also became acquainted with the work of Cuban composers Amadeo Roldán and Alejandro García Caturla, both of whom had created an Afro-

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194. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

195. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 136–39.

196. Alberto Alén Pérez, “Guerrero Díaz, Félix.” Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed 31 August 2016 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/11933>.

197. Chico O’Farrill, interview by René López; Graciela, interview by Anthony Brown and Raul Fernández.

198. O’Farrill quoted in Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 145; Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 143–45, 149.

Cubanist style of concert music by blending black Cuban rhythms with modernist innovations. Influenced by this movement, in 1945 O’Farrill began writing a jazz suite based on Afro-Cuban themes.<sup>199</sup>

O’Farrill wrote for Isidro Pérez’s band, at the time one of the most jazz-oriented groups in Cuba, gaining an opportunity to express his modernist bent by writing a modernist arrangement of “Deep Purple” in 5/4 meter.<sup>200</sup> Music critic Luc Delannoy noted that O’Farrill did not yet know about Bauzá’s Cubop experiments at this time, and argued that O’Farrill was the “true creator of Cubop.”<sup>201</sup> However, Isidro Pérez’s band had great difficulty in finding work; there was little demand in Cuba for strongly jazz-influenced music. O’Farrill moved to New York City, later saying that “going to New York was an act of rebellion”; he felt that “if this orquesta is not good enough for Cuba, Cuba is not good enough for me.” A comparison of O’Farrill’s and Bauzá’s backgrounds, their statements about their motivations for coming to the United States, and their attractions to jazz is instructive: Both were versed in European classical music and interested in pursuing jazz as a career, and both sought economic opportunities to make music. But while Bauzá was a working-class black musician who identified jazz with the vibrant black culture of the Harlem Renaissance, O’Farrill was an upper-class white Cuban who identified jazz with dominant trends emanating from the United States.

Cuban expatriate musicians often aided their fellow countrymen upon arrival to New York City, and Bauzá helped O’Farrill get his bearings. Bauzá introduced O’Farrill to the bandleader Noro Morales, and O’Farrill began writing for him. O’Farrill also became friends with the brilliant bop trumpeter Fats Navarro, a Florida native of partial Cuban descent, who introduced him to the bop scene. Also, O’Farrill worked as a ghostwriter for the formidable bebop arranger Walter Gil Fuller. Fuller systematically accepted more work than he could personally complete, and subcontracted portions of arrangements to a handful of arrangers who worked for him. Fuller gave his ghostwriters specific instructions, for example guidance on how to harmonize certain passages.<sup>202</sup> Benny Goodman, who always was savvy to twists and turns in the music business, formed a “Bebop Band” in 1948. In the following year, O’Farrill heard that Goodman planned to use Fuller’s ghostwriting team and directly offered Goodman his “Undercurrent Blues” to avoid Fuller taking credit for his work. Goodman was favorably impressed, recorded “Undercurrent Blues,” and hired O’Farrill as one of his own staff arrangers. This, of course, was a dream come true for O’Farrill, as he later remembered. Goodman was also responsible for bestowing O’Farrill’s nickname “Chico.”<sup>203</sup> Goodman once introduced O’Farrill to Stravinsky, in a meeting that was memorable for the young arranger.<sup>204</sup>

Although O’Farrill had started work on an Afro-Cuban suite in 1945, he had never been particularly interested in Cuban music. As he stated, he only became interested in it “when I heard the Machito band.” Machito’s music was different from the Cuban *típico* music that O’Farrill knew in Cuba: “I came to New York and I heard the Machito orchestra and I was really surprised that this orchestra was so advanced. . . . I could say that for the first time I was really interested in Cuban music; I heard sounds that attracted me. I heard, you know, harmonies that were rich.”<sup>205</sup> And O’Farrill added: “It was Afro-Cuban jazz. *Jazz*: that word was very important for me. *Jazz*, it was jazz. It

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199. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 140.

200. *Ibid.*, 136–39.

201. *Ibid.*, 140.

202. Luc Delannoy, personal communication with the author.

203. Chico O’Farrill, interview by René López.

204. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 143–45, 149.

205. Chico O’Farrill, *Machito, A Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Icarus Films, 1987), videocassette (VHS).

was jazz-oriented. It was rich, rich as any form of jazz, and it was very aggressive; instrumentally it was rich, too. That's what attracted me; otherwise I don't think that I would have been interested."<sup>206</sup>

Bauzá asked O'Farrill to arrange several *boleros* to feature Graciela's vocals, and O'Farrill used modernistic harmonies in these *bolero* arrangements. For example, when the voice returns after an instrumental interlude in "Alma con alma," he injects a deceptive cadence before falling back to the tonic. As experienced a singer as Graciela was, she had not previously encountered such untraditional arrangements and found them so difficult to sing that she once asked Bauzá to stop using O'Farrill. However, Bauzá convinced Graciela to adapt to O'Farrill's style.<sup>207</sup> In general, Bauzá used O'Farrill to arrange *boleros* and concert music because O'Farrill was less attuned to *clave*-logic than was Hernández. As Ray Santos put it, "René Hernández was a Cuban arranger with a jazz approach, and . . . Chico O'Farrill is a jazz arranger with a Cuban approach."<sup>208</sup> Still, O'Farrill wrote many danceable pieces, including "Vaya Niña" and "Carambola," which embeds polytonal chords within a *clave* base.

Producer Norman Granz was impressed with O'Farrill's ability to merge modernist jazz with Cuban music. Because Afro-Cuban jazz was becoming commercially viable, Granz commissioned O'Farrill to write *The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*, recorded for the Clef record label on 21 December 1950.<sup>209</sup> (This *Suite* is included in this edition.) *The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite* is in five movements, each representing an Afro-Cuban musical rhythm and thus constituting a compendium of Cuban music styles. The *Suite* begins with a trumpet solo, presumably performed by Bauzá. The opening movement, "Cancion," is based on a rhythm often used in Afro-Cuban liturgical music, and O'Farrill lets the percussionists loose. The second movement, "Mambo" highlights the ensemble and percussionists in Afro-Cuban *guaguancó* rhythm, and leads to an extensive alto saxophone solo. A transition includes a brief trumpet solo by Sweets Edison and a clarinet solo by Bauzá, and leads into the third movement, "6/8," in Afro-Cuban *güiro* rhythm. The fourth movement, "Jazz," features solos by Flip Phillips, Charlie Parker, and Buddy Rich.<sup>210</sup> And the final movement, "Rumba Abierta" in an Afro-Cuban carnival rhythm, showcases Machito's percussionists and ensemble. O'Farrill considered it paradoxical that his best-known work was based on traditional Cuban styles: "That's the irony of it: I was never an expert on Cuban music. What I did for example in that *Suite* was purely instinctive; I never was an expert on Cuban music, frankly, and I never researched it, and I never paid too much attention to it really. They asked me, 'write a suite, Chico,' [so] I just wrote according to my best understanding, letting my jazz sensibility to guide me most of the time."<sup>211</sup> The positive reception of *The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite* led to commissions for other high-profile Afro-Cuban orchestral projects such as Stan Kenton's "Cuban Episode," O'Farrill's second *Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*, and his *Manteca Suite* for Dizzy Gillespie's big band augmented by Machito's rhythm section.

## MAMBO TIME

During the 1950s, the *mambo* arose as a high-profile dance craze. Although it was associated largely with the Cuban bandleader Dámaso Pérez Prado, both the word "mambo" and its characteristic style predated Pérez Prado. The term "mambo" origi-

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206. Chico O'Farrill, interview by René López.

207. Graciela, interview on WKCR-FM.

208. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

209. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 145–50.

210. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts; Roberts, *The Latin Tinge*, 133–41; Stearns, *The Story of Jazz*, 243–56; Gitler, *From Swing to Bop*, 291–93; Gillespie and Fraser, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop*, 347–49.

211. Chico O'Farrill, interview by René López.

nated in Congo, and originally referred to liturgical songs of the Afro-Cuban Palo (or Congo-derived) subculture.<sup>212</sup> In 1938, the *danzón* group Arcaño y sus Maravillas recorded Orestes López's composition entitled "Mambo" with the usual *charanga* instrumentation of violins, flutes, and rhythm section.<sup>213</sup> However, López's "Mambo" dispensed with the sectional form and modulations typical to the *danzón*, and instead consisted of a short introduction followed by a *montuno* (or vamp) overlaid with flute improvisations and a vocal chorus. Furthermore, Arcaño used the conga drum. De-emphasizing European melodies and employing *rumba* and *son* influences, Arcaño reworked the *danzón*, Africanizing it and labeling it "*danzón de nuevo ritmo*" ("danzón with a new beat"). One observer, noting that this new style boils down to a vamp overlaid with improvised riffs, called it "ordered anarchy."<sup>214</sup> Around the same time as Arcaño, Cuban bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez was innovating by incorporating influences from the Afro-Cuban Palo religion in his music, and, most significantly, adding riff-based finales called *mambos* (or *diablos*, "devils") to his arrangements.<sup>215</sup> Cubans soon began using the term *mambo* to refer to arrangements based on riffs and *montunos*.

Cuban popular musicians and fans have always had a penchant for coining neologisms as trademarks for genres—as Acosta puts it, there is a "tendency to pigeon-hole."<sup>216</sup> This tendency has often served as a marketing strategy. Arcaño and Rodríguez's work aside, Cuban big band arrangers in this period routinely based their work on saxophone and trumpet riffs; *mambo* style had been incubating among Cuban musicians in both Havana and New York City for some time.<sup>217</sup> Acosta suggests that the first jazz-based Cuban group to use *montuno*-riff *mambo* structures may have been Julio Cueva's group, for whom René Hernández was the arranger.<sup>218</sup> Arrangers Bebo Valdés, El Niño Rivera, and Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill also wrote in this style in Cuba, and Machito's arrangements by José Madera and John Barteel from the early 1940s employed a riff-based sound. The *mambo* style—if not the name—thus clearly developed prior to the rise of Pérez Prado.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, the term *mambo* already had been catching on before Pérez Prado's fame took hold; in addition to the term being used by Arcaño and Rodríguez, José Curbelo's "El rey del mambo," featuring Rodríguez on vocals, was released in New York in 1946,<sup>220</sup> and in 1947 Tito Rodríguez came out with a band called the Mambo Devils.<sup>221</sup> In response to Pérez Prado's claiming credit for the innovations that these many musicians had fostered, Bebo Valdés coined the term *batanga* in 1952 as a rival marketing term.<sup>222</sup> Reception, however, is the final arbiter of such tactics: musical terms either catch on or they do not, according to popular taste.

Dovetailing with the *tango* and *conga* vogues, the *mambo* grew on fertile ground. Moreover, the demise of many swing bands in the late 1940s left a demand for dance music. As the *mambo* label gained currency, Machito recorded an LP entitled *Mambo Is*

212. Ortiz, *Los instrumentos de la música afrocubana*, 232–33, 241, 246; Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 110–11; Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 82.

213. Orestes López cites this as the date of the recording in his interview by Adrianna Orejuela. Lise Waxer, personal communication with the author. Giró, however, cites Arcaño stating that the year was 1939, while others claim that it was as early as 1935. See Giró, "Todo lo que Ud. quiso saber sobre el mambo," 215.

214. Odilio Urfé in Giró, "Todo lo que Ud. quiso saber sobre el mambo," 215.

215. Giró, "Todo lo que Ud. quiso saber sobre el mambo," 211.

216. Robbins, "Practical and Abstract Taxonomy," 379–89.

217. Giró, "Todo lo que Ud. quiso saber sobre el mambo," 216.

218. Acosta, *Del tambor al sintetizador*, 69.

219. Giró, "Todo lo que Ud. quiso saber sobre el mambo," 220–21.

220. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 71.

221. Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 91–92.

222. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 89.

*Here to Stay* in 1950. Soon, a *mambo* craze was afoot. Magazines referred to its “high sex quotient” and “lids off demonic quality.”<sup>223</sup> A 1951 article in *Ebony* magazine proclaimed that “[i]ts impulses are primitive, its rhythms are frenetic, and it is called the *mambo*.”<sup>224</sup> Tin Pan Alley tune-smiths began penning their own *mambos*; ten were released in October 1954 alone. But like the North American re-workings of the *conga* and *rumba*, some of these *mambos* merely amounted to stereotyped versions of Cuban music.

Machito’s first *timbalero*, a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent named Tito Puente, organized a band in September 1949 called the Picadilly Boys, after *picadillo*, a dish of spiced chopped beef. The band, a small *conjunto* consisting of a rhythm section and three trumpets, debuted at the Palladium. Puente’s charisma struck a chord with the predominantly Puerto Rican crowds, and he soon became a star. After Puente’s debut engagement, he abandoned the *conjunto* format, adopted big-band instrumentation, and developed a winning formula of showmanship that emphasized his style of musical excellence. A master entertainer and a virtuoso performer, Puente played exciting *timbales* solos during fast numbers and sensitive vibraphone obbligatos during *boleros*. Puente also was a brilliant arranger who forged a distinctly personal, flashy style of jazz-tinged Latin dance music. He was soon crowned “King of the Mambo.” Puente was strongly influenced by René Hernández’s innovations in arranging. Another rising star of the New York *mambo* scene to emerge was the Puerto Rican vocalist Tito Rodríguez, who started a band called the Mambo Devils in 1947. Rodríguez made his early reputation singing in a manner highly influenced by Machito, like him often using vocables such as “no, no, no, no” in his improvisations. Eventually, Rodríguez focused on *boleros*.<sup>225</sup> One prominent musician who played with Machito, Puente, and Rodríguez opines that Puente and Rodríguez had “very good bands, [but] to me they were basically spin-offs of Machito, you know, the saxophone, trumpet concept of big band jazz” combined with Afro-Cuban rhythms.<sup>226</sup> However, by 1952, Puente and Rodríguez, perhaps impelled in part by their appeal to the predominantly Puerto Rican Latino community in New York, surpassed Machito as the City’s most popular *mamberos*.

In 1954, promoter George Goldner put together a “Mambo-USA” tour featuring Machito, Joe Loco’s Quintet, and other assorted acts such as the Arthur Murray Television Mambo Dancers.<sup>227</sup> Tastes in particular *mambo* styles were allied to particular geographic regions. Although the New York bands were played on the radio on the West Coast, Pérez Prado reigned there.<sup>228</sup> Prado arrived on the East Coast in 1952, but New Yorkers preferred the percussion-heavy, jazz-soaked style of Machito, Tito Puente, and Tito Rodríguez. In 1954, a new Cuban dance, the *cha-cha-chá*, arrived in the United States,<sup>229</sup> and perhaps because it was easier to execute than the *mambo*, caught the country by storm. While most bands in Cuba used the *danzón*-derived (or *charanga*) flute and violin instrumentation for playing *cha-chas*, New York bands catered to *cha-cha* dance steps using trumpet and saxophone big band instrumentation. And significantly, the New York bands were steeped in the jazz tradition.

## MULTI-CULTURAL DANCING AT THE PALLADIUM

Integral to music throughout the African diaspora is a connection with dancers, and this connection was certainly a central tenant of the Machito aesthetic. While Machito

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223. Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 84.

224. Ibid.

225. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 2001.

226. Anonymous, personal communication with the author.

227. Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 97.

228. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 164.

229. Roberts, *The Latin Tinge*, 131–34.

and his Afro-Cubans was notable for its innovative blending of jazz with Cuban music, the group performed primarily as a dance band. In the late 1940s, Machito's repertoire was balanced between Afro-Cuban jazz and dance numbers. In the middle and late 1950s, the band became more dance-oriented and developed a repertoire of perhaps sixty percent vocal dance music, twenty percent instrumental dance music, and twenty percent instrumental music meant primarily for listening.<sup>230</sup> These categories overlapped, since all of Machito's music was danceable, and all of it was jazz-based. The growing market for dance music may have been spurred by increasing Latino immigration to the United States. Thanks to a post-War slump in Puerto Rico's economy, an estimated 300,000 Puerto Ricans arrived in New York City between 1948 and 1950, increasing the demand for Latin dance music.<sup>231</sup> Machito's jazz influences, however, were never at odds with the requirements of dancers, since the band combined danceable big band jazz with bebop influences and Cuban dance rhythms.

A new dance hall called the Palladium was founded in New York a few years before the mambo boom and emerged as a focal point of Latin dance music in the city. Before it was called the Palladium, in 1947, the Alma Dance Studios at 53rd Street, located nearby the well-attended Arcadia and Roseland Ballrooms, faced stiff competition for audiences. Owner Tommy Martin, hoping that Latin music would increase his business, hired Machito and his Afro-Cubans to play for Latin dances on Wednesday nights. Machito's friend Federico Pagani promoted these dances and distributed flyers uptown near subway exits, which caused some people to refer to them as "Subway Dances." The venue was unofficially dubbed the Blen Blen Blen Club, after the popular Chano Pozo song. Machito and his Afro-Cubans headlined, and other bands performed, including bands led by Noro Morales and José Curbelo, among others. The Blen Blen Blen Club became a big success, often drawing several hundred people to a single dance. Graciela remembered that the ballroom once was so crowded that its coat room quickly filled up, forcing patrons to check their outerwear at a restaurant down the block.<sup>232</sup> Before the Blen Blen Blen Club opened, Latin bands had worked in downtown venues as so-called "relief bands" rather than as headline attractions (Machito's engagement at La Conga was a notable exception). Furthermore, it was unusual for downtown clubs to cater to black and Latino crowds. Martin was happy with the initial success of the Blen Blen Blen Club, but he told Pagani that he was concerned that the preponderance of people of color in the audience would turn white patrons away. As more and more dark-skinned Latinos and African Americans came to the dances, Pagani remembers Martin telling him: "You're gonna ruin my business." Pagani countered by pointing out that Martin was doing great business: "What do you want, the green or the black? If you want the green, you can have it . . . otherwise, throw them out of here."<sup>233</sup> Eventually, Martin agreed with Pagani and offered Machito and his Afro-Cubans a steady engagement of several months. In 1948, Max Hyman bought the Blen Blen Blen Club and renamed it the Palladium.<sup>234</sup> The interior of the Palladium was attractive. Single women could sit in a special section, and dancers divided the floor into areas for beginners and advanced dancers.<sup>235</sup> The Palladium was the number one spot for the *mambo* in New York, and remained popular until 1966.<sup>236</sup>

A pattern developed at the Palladium: Wednesdays were dominated by a white audience, Fridays attracted a mixed crowd, and Saturdays drew mainly Latinos.

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230. Mario Grillo, interview by the author, New York, 2000; Jose Madera, Jr., interview by the author, New York, 2000.

231. Rene López in Graciela, interview on WKCR-FM.

232. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Graciela, interview on WKCR-FM.

233. *Machito, A Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Ircarus Films, 1987), video-cassette (VHS).

234. Rondon, *El libro de la salsa*, 30.

235. Boggs, *Salsiology*, 30.

236. Waxer, "Mambo Kings," 159.

Sundays also drew a mixed crowd with blacks predominating, perhaps because the admission charge was lower that day.<sup>237</sup> Max Salazar remembers that Wednesdays also attracted celebrities: “That would be the night you could see Marlon Brando, Sammy Davis, Jr., Harry Belafonte, Kim Novak. . . . Hollywood personalities sitting in the audience there.”<sup>238</sup> An emcee occasionally announced the presence of the celebrities to the crowd and shone a spotlight on them.<sup>239</sup> Salazar postulates that the New York *mambo* scene was remarkable for its lack of racial tension. There was no feeling that people of certain ethnicities were unwelcome on particular nights, he said, but “it just worked out that way.” Moreover, as time went on, “everybody started going on these different dates—it wasn’t black Sunday anymore or Hispanic Saturday and white Wednesday. Forget it!” Others who remember the era confirm this situation, as Salazar put it:

During the late ’50s and ’60s, it was a lot of inter-marriages because the music is what brought these dancers together at the Palladium Ballroom. Yeah, because what they did was when they got together at the Palladium, they got to find out that they were just alike, that people were like them. There were family, they had married, they had children, they had rent problems. And the *mambo* is the things [*sic*] that really removed these barriers, by bringing these people together, because by bringing them to that dancehall, they got to learn about each other. And realize there’s not that much difference.<sup>240</sup>

African-American mambo dancer Ernest Ensley remembered that when he went to predominately white clubs in Brooklyn he never encountered racial discrimination and never had problems finding partners among white women.<sup>241</sup> Machito’s assessment of racial relations and *mambo* culture might not be an exaggeration: “That’s where integration began.”<sup>242</sup>

While they performed at the Palladium and other predominantly Latin venues, Machito and his Afro-Cubans also performed at the Savoy and Renaissance Ballrooms for predominantly black crowds. There, the band played its usual *mambo* repertoire, sharing the stage with jazz bands led by the likes of Arnett Cobb and Cootie Williams.<sup>243</sup> Machito’s saxophonist Leslie Johnakins remembered that when Machito first played at the Savoy in Harlem, many of their Latino fans followed them there to dance, leaving the African-American regulars to watch from the sidelines. Gradually, however, black fans learned the Cuban dances, just as Johnakins and other North Americans had learned to play Cuban music.<sup>244</sup> Referring to the African Americans, Machito remembered:

They, they was crazy about it. They was dancing [and] . . . it was exciting and you know, we was playing for black[s] and it was black music, so there was no—you didn’t have to make no explanation to a black person. . . . [T]hey come from where the rhythm comes from.<sup>245</sup>

Many white fans also became proficient—some became experts—at the *mambo*: Machito noted that many of the people who regularly came to his performances consisted of white Americans “that know how to dance.”<sup>246</sup> While the *mambo* was firmly rooted in African-based aesthetics, its magic became available to everyone. African

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237. Boggs, *Salsiology*, 129, 147; Max Salazar, interview by the author.

238. Max Salazar, interview by the author.

239. Ray Santos, interview by the author, New York, 2001.

240. Max Salazar, interview by the author.

241. Boggs, *Salsiology*, 148.

242. *Machito, A Latin Jazz Legacy*, directed by Carlos Ortiz (New York: Ircarus Films, 1987), video-cassette (VHS).

243. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp.

244. Leslie Johnakins, interview by David Carp.

245. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

246. *Ibid.*

American exhibition dancer Ernest Ensley observed that the great popularity of the *mambo* says a great deal about the culture of the United States: “Here you have a music whose lyrics are in Spanish, unintelligible to the average American. Yet from the ’40s through the ’70s, it became an integral part of the American experience.”<sup>247</sup>

### KENYA AND “FRENZY”

In the years that followed, the Machito band focused more on dance music than bebop, but in 1957 promoters wanted the Afro-Cubans to record a jazz-oriented LP that would cement their high profile in the jazz field. This LP was entitled *Kenya*, according to the liner notes, in homage to the struggle against colonialism in Africa. Perhaps the impetus for Machito and his promoters to draw attention to African colonialism was inspired by the Mau Mau rebellion of 1952–1956. Bauzá took very seriously the African subject of the *Kenya* LP and prepared for the recording project by consulting with the Nigerian bandleader Babatunde Olatunji and searching for books on Kenya in the library (he later remembered finding material on “Swahili and Congo,” but nothing on Kenya).<sup>248</sup>

*Kenya* was recorded in December 1957 in the heart of Spanish Harlem at the Odd-fellows Temple (which had a theater and a recording studio) and featured compositions and arrangements by René Hernández, A. K. Salim, and Ray Santos, as well as stellar solo performances by trumpeter Joe Newman and alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley. The band rehearsed prior to the recording session, but the featured soloists did not. Santos remembers that the first takes of Cannonball’s fantastically rhythmic solos “knocked everyone out,” and that on following takes, he played equally impressive, but different, solos.<sup>249</sup> Although Cannonball was hired as a guest artist and not a section man, he enjoyed playing with Machito so much that he asked to lead the saxophone section on “Blues à la Machito.”<sup>250</sup> René Hernández contributed original compositions, infusing big-band timbres and modernist harmonies with a percussion-soaked Afro-Cuban sensibility. Bauzá had met the African American arranger Ahmad Khatab Salim (born Albert Atkinson, also called Ahmad Kharab Salim) in Paris, was impressed with his work, and asked him to participate in the *Kenya* project. Salim’s arrangements featured improvisation by guest soloists; “Frenzy,” included in this volume, features soloists Newman and Adderley along with extensive improvisations by the band’s percussionists. As Bauzá had done with other non-Latin arrangers such as John Bartee, he provided Salim with bass lines and instructions on *clave*.<sup>251</sup>

### THE LATER YEARS

In 1960 and ’61, Machito and his Afro-Cubans completed a three-month tour of Japan, where, like many visiting jazz luminaries, they received a regal reception. Cuban dance music already had made significant inroads in Japan: recordings by Machito, Prado, Cugat, and Puente were already known there. Graciela remembered that arriving at the airport, musicians were surprised to see a beautiful display of flowers and Machito LP covers. During press interviews, journalists told band members that they already had researched the history of the Afro-Cubans so they did not need to ask

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247. Boggs, *Salsiology*, 149–52.

248. *Ibid.*

249. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp; José Madera, Jr., interview by the author, New York, 2000.

250. Mario Bauzá, interview by John Storm Roberts.

251. Mario Bauzá, interview by Anthony Brown; “A. K. Salim,” Wikipedia, accessed 31 August 2015, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.\\_K.\\_Salim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._K._Salim); Feather, *Encyclopedia*, 408–09; Ginell, *Evolution of Mann*, 45.



them about it. Instead, journalists just wanted to know whether their guests were enjoying the reception festivities.<sup>252</sup>

Back in the United States, the public taste in Latin bands was turning to smaller ensembles, and Machito had difficulty finding work. Machito thought there might be more work in Puerto Rico and moved there in 1966 with a pared-down version of his band. After eight months, however, Machito and his band returned to New York. In the years that followed, the band only worked two to four nights a week. In addition to larger venues such as the Chateau Madrid and the Roseland Ballroom, they played for weddings and bar mitzvahs, and in hospitals and schools.<sup>253</sup> On January 1, 1975, the Machito band played Arturo “Chico” O’Farrill’s brilliant composition “Oro, Incienso, y Mirra” (“Gold, Incense, and Myrrh”), featuring Dizzy Gillespie, at the first jazz concert ever performed in St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The subsequent LP recording of this, “Three Afro-Cuban Jazz Moods,” which featured Clark Terry on trumpet, was released on Granz’s Pablo label and was nominated for a 1975 Grammy Award in the jazz category, but lost to Ellington.<sup>254</sup>

In 1975, the jazz promoter George Wien asked Machito to form an octet to work in Paris and Hamburg. Bauzá felt that such a small group would be unable to maintain the band’s signature style. However, Machito disagreed and split with Bauzá, going on tour without his longtime associate.<sup>255</sup> Machito assembled a band from the top New York Latin musicians,<sup>256</sup> and Machito’s Latin Jazz Octet performed alongside jazz greats like Charles Mingus and Roy Haynes at festivals in Paris and Berlin, and upon their return to the United States, at the Newport Jazz Festival.<sup>257</sup> Machito saw an opportunity to perform in the festival market, and he re-formed his big band, this time without Bauzá and Graciela, but featuring his son Mario Grillo on *timbales* and his daughter Paula on vocals. More European tours followed for Machito, and the LP *Machito and his Big Band Salsa, 1982*, on the Dutch Timeless label, won the Grammy for Best Tropical Music.<sup>258</sup> Machito found the European jazz market to be lucrative: fans around the world had heard Machito’s recordings but had never seen his band live. Machito’s band’s new fans, however, differed from the Palladium “mamboniks” of the past; many of them were members of the 1960s counter-culture. At the same time as Machito’s international success, he began to receive accolades back in the United States. He received a letter of commendation from United States President Jimmy Carter, and on 20 August 1981, Machito’s contributions to New York City were recognized by Mayor Koch on the steps of City Hall. Despite Bauzá’s estrangement from Machito, Bauzá joined in honoring his long-time associate and friend.<sup>259</sup> In 1984, Machito’s ten-piece Latin Jazz Ensemble left for a European tour, but in London, Machito suffered a cardiac arrest and died in his sleep from a cerebral hemorrhage.<sup>260</sup> In 1985, East Harlem’s intersection at East 111<sup>th</sup> Street and Third Avenue was named Machito Square in his honor.<sup>261</sup>

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252. Machito, interview by Max Salazar; Graciela, interview by Brown.

253. Grillo, interview by the author.

254. Salazar, “Machito, Mario, and Graciela, Part Two,” 9–10; Medina, “Machito,” 62.

255. It was rumored that there were additional, personal reasons for the split.

256. The band included trumpeter Victor Paz, tenor saxophonist Mario Rivera, pianist Jorge Dalto, bassist Victor Venegas, *conguero* Julito Collazo, and Machito’s son, timbalero Mario Grillo. Dalto, a brilliant Argentine pianist, arranged the band’s regular repertoire, such as “Mambo Inn” and “Cuban Fantasy,” for the small group (Grillo, interview by the author).

257. Grillo, interview by the author.

258. Salazar, “Machito, Mario, and Graciela, Part Two,” 2.

259. *Ibid.*, 11.

260. Salazar, “Machito, Mario, and Graciela”; Jon Pareles, No headline [Machito’s Obituary], *New York Times*, 1984, accessed 31 August 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/17/obituaries/no-headline-128949.html>.

261. “Machito,” Wikipedia, accessed 18 September 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machito>; Feirstein, *Naming New York*, 135.

Machito's son Mario Grillo (named after Mario Bauzá) had been sitting in with the Afro-Cubans since he was six years old, and waged mock battles on the timbales with the likes of Tito Puente. Grillo had joined the band as a full member at age fourteen, and became the band's musical director in 1975.<sup>262</sup> Grillo kept the band going after his father's death and called his band The Machito Orchestra. The band performed concerts in Europe, Lincoln Center, and elsewhere.

Mario Bauzá and Graciela had left Machito and his Afro-Cubans in 1975 to form their own band. Long overshadowed by his co-leader, as leader of his own band Bauzá soon received the credit and the limelight that he deserved. Bauzá released several critically acclaimed LPs, including the aptly-named *My Time is Now*. In 1993, Bauzá died of cancer. His obituary in the *New York Times* affirmed that he "helped change the sound of American music. . . . Without Mr. Bauza [*sic*] American music would be radically different from what it is today. . . . [H]e helped introduce Latin music to the United States, first deeply influencing jazz, then popular music, then rock-and-roll."<sup>263</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Bauzá, Machito, Chano Pozo, and Gillespie have been credited with bringing Latin music to the United States, but Washburne points out that, more accurately, they "reintroduced and revitalized the [Latin] Caribbean connection,"<sup>264</sup> because these tinges had been present in the United States since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. Perhaps, instead of "marrying" jazz to Latin music, Bauzá facilitated a kind of "second honeymoon." Nevertheless, Bauzá's impact was fundamental; O'Farrill called him a "visionary" in his decision to "bring those jazz people in front, you know, in the front line" to improvise over Cuban rhythms.<sup>265</sup> And, based upon the deep structural elements of Afro-Cuban music, the Machito band's influence went farther: Machito, Graciela, and René Hernández played a major role in diffusing *clave*-based rhythms in North America. While North American music traditionally had constituted a rich amalgam, Machito and his Afro-Cubans forged a more perfect union between African, Latin, and Anglo elements in the music of the United States.

Paving the way for the other New York *mambo* bands, and later, indirectly, for *salsa*, which developed during the 1970s in New York, Machito played a major role in the development of the Latin musical subculture that thrived in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. Machito's band was notable for its avowed pride in its African origins, demonstrated not only in its name, but also in how it foregrounded African-based drumming and Afro-Cuban singing, and how it collaborated with black North American musicians. This pan-African stance helped subvert negative stereotypes of Afro-Latin culture and served as a healing salve in the face of racism, working in tandem with cognate developments in the Civil Rights and black nationalist movements. Machito once said that playing for African American dancers in Harlem "was exciting," because this "was black music . . . you didn't need to make no explanation [about our music] to a black person."<sup>266</sup> In some ways, Machito and his

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262. Medina, "Machito," 62.

263. Watrous, "Mario Bauza, Band Leader, Dies; Champion of Latin Music Was 82," *New York Times*, 1993, accessed 31 August 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/07/12/obituaries/mario-bauza-band-leader-dies-champion-of-latin-music-was-82.html>.

264. Washburne, *The Clave of Jazz*, 77.

265. Chico O'Farrill, interview by the author. Cuban ethnomusicologist Leonardo Acosta wrote that Bauzá played a "leading role in the creation of Afro-Cuban jazz." Acosta, *Cubano Be*, 98. Even New York-based bandleader Alberto Socarras, who was active before Machito and no stranger to jazz (he is credited with recording the first jazz flute solo), asserted that it never occurred to him to mix Cuban music and jazz; he considered them two separate things. Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 37; Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

266. Machito, interview by Max Salazar.

Afro-Cubans represented a continuation of big band jazz, which, of course, was dance music. Bauzá built on his background with Chick Webb and Cab Calloway, and created an organization that kept working—and kept fans dancing—well after the demise of most swing bands. A connection to dancers, integral to music throughout the African diaspora, was a pillar of Machito’s aesthetic; whereas the band has been highly regarded for its Latin jazz innovations, Machito and his Afro-Cubans worked mainly as a dance band. The jazz innovations, however, were never at odds with dancers: even the band’s adventurous bop experiments were grounded in the requirements of the dancing public.

While Machito’s music was rooted in African-based aesthetics, its magic was available to everyone. Machito’s white fans, too, danced the *mambo*—some expertly. Latin dance music was at the forefront of mainstream popular culture in the United States. Several white musicians became important performers of Latin dance music in the wake of Machito’s influence, the most notable of whom is salsa bandleader Larry Harlow, whose promoters heralded as “El Judío Maravilloso” (“the Marvelous Jew”).<sup>267</sup> As African American exhibition dancer Ernest Ensley observed about the *mambo*: “Here you have a music whose lyrics are in Spanish, unintelligible to the average American. Yet from the ’40s through the ’70s, it became an integral part of the American experience.”<sup>268</sup>

In symbiotic union with similar African-derived traditions long present in the United States, Machito’s Afro-Cubanisms played a significant role to transform the rhythmic basis of North American music from a swing-feel that emphasized the backbeat to straight eighth notes and syncopated cells that emphasized the downbeat.<sup>269</sup> Related to the *clave*, these syncopated cells were already present in black North American culture, for example, in ragtime and “ham-bone” rhyme-songs, but as *salsa* superstar Ray Barretto affirms, by the 1960s the “whole basis of American rhythm . . . changed jazz shuffle rhythm to a straight-ahead straight eighth approach, which is Latin.”<sup>270</sup> Rhythm and blues musicians availed themselves of Cuban influences during the *mambo* boom; R&B luminary Johnny Otis even recorded “Mambo Boogie” with Machito’s rhythm section in 1951.<sup>271</sup> Many hits in the ’50s not categorized as “Latin” were influenced by Afro-Cuban rhythms: for example Elvis Presley’s “It’s Now or Never” and the doo-wop hit “Little Darling” incorporate idiosyncratic re-workings of Cuban rhythms. Muddy Waters adopted *clave*-inflected patterns in his signature blues style. The assimilation of Caribbean-tinged influences in popular music gained momentum with James Brown’s innovations in funk music, and later with developments in disco and hip-hop.<sup>272</sup>

In the jazz sphere, drummer Art Blakey took the Gillespie/Pozo experiments to new heights, instigating collaborative drumming sessions such as his LP *Orgy in Rhythm* (1957).<sup>273</sup> John Coltrane’s drummer Elvin Jones acknowledged his own absorption of Afro-Cuban drumming, and his assimilation of this influence resulted in an especially

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267. Other than Harlow, prominent whites in the New York Latin music scene have included trombonist Barry Rogers and trumpeter Marty Sheller.

268. Boggs, *Salsiology*, 149–52.

269. Stewart astutely notes that Bauzá was not alone in learning the “greatest lesson” concerning the swung backbeat of African American music: even Fletcher Henderson’s top-shelf musicians had to learn to swing after Louis Armstrong joined the band in 1924. There has, however, been “little analysis of the reverse development – the change . . . to ‘straighter’ rhythms.” See Stewart, “‘Funky Drummer,’” 293.

270. Roberts, *Latin Tinge*, 160; Stewart, “‘Funky Drummer,’” 293.

271. Delannoy, *¡Caliente!: Une histoire du latin jazz*, 96, 164; Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, 81.

272. While acknowledging the mambo’s impact, Stewart demonstrates the importance of dovetailing New Orleans influences on these changes, documenting the brilliant contributions of James Brown’s drummers, Clayton Fillyau, Clyde Stubblefield, and Jab’o Starks. See Stewart, “‘Funky Drummer,’” 295, 300, 302–05.

273. Monson, “Art Blakey’s African Diaspora,” 340–45.

rich musical fusion. Jones, already in his earliest recordings with Coltrane, adapted *clave*-soaked patterns on the ride cymbal (for example in “Mr. Knight”).<sup>274</sup> Jones’s performances on Coltrane’s influential *Love Supreme* album are derived largely from Afro-Cuban rhythms.<sup>275</sup> However, Jones adapted these influences in his own idiom so that, while musical analysis demonstrates a direct Afro-Cuban link, the sonic result does not sound “Latin” to jazz-oriented ears. Another pervasive Cuban influence on music in the United States has been the use of long sections of music using static harmonies (*montuno*-riffs, or vamps). Traditionally, North American music had utilized common-practice chord progressions, but beginning in the 1950s both jazz and dance music increasingly had sections that used prolonged static harmonies. Ray Santos remembers that at one time jazz musicians often asked Latin musicians “why do you stay on one chord,” but later—after Horace Silver, Miles Davis, and other jazz innovators also “got modal”—they understood.<sup>276</sup>

The genius of Machito and his Afro-Cubans lies in its collaborative nature. Bauzá is best understood in light of his personal and artistic profile, which was extraordinarily humble. After all, the band that was his brainchild was named after his brother-in-law, not himself. Musicologist Leonardo Acosta notes that despite playing a major role launching the careers of Gillespie and Chano Pozo, Bauzá “stayed behind the scenes for decades, respected. . . . [S]carcely given any serious attention by most critics . . . Mario was incredibly modest.”<sup>277</sup> While Bauzá was enamored of jazz improvisation, he was aware of his limitations and remembered Chick Webb’s admonitions not to compete with master jazz improvisers and not to project himself as a jazz soloist.<sup>278</sup> Bauzá’s grounding in European classical music was in line with the longstanding roles of Latino players in the United States as “music-stand musicians.” But Bauzá brought his polished professionalism to the fore. His interpretive skills and formidable experiences in Cuban and swing music informed his integrated vision for a new aesthetic that combined Afro-Cuban music with African American dance music and bebop, a central tenet of the Afro-modernist aesthetic that took shape at mid-century. While Bauzá rightly took credit for these innovations, he never claimed to be a master of *clave*. The band’s *clave*-logic came from Machito, Graciela, René Hernández, and the percussionists. As the band’s front man, Machito also contributed his social skills and personable nature, which worked in tandem with his keen awareness of the *barrio* scene. Machito’s eminent sociability was at the heart of the band’s aesthetic. The welcoming magnanimity that Machito expressed in his singing and personality contributed greatly to the band’s exuberant and inclusive air. As one musician remembers, even “in the most adverse circumstances,” Machito “always had a wonderful smile for you, and he always had something to share.” The band’s collaborative nature was founded upon this sharing spirit, which was “what Macho [Machito] was all about. Macho wasn’t the center of attraction. *His whole band . . . was ‘Machito.’*”<sup>279</sup>

The band was a “family affair” (to invoke soul singer Sly Stone’s song) not only because Machito, Bauzá, and Graciela were related, but also because that band’s musical and social style was based upon an interactive and inclusive ethos that was central to Afro-diasporic arts. The Machito band, while celebrating pan-African pride, also

274. Elvin Jones, personal communication with the author.

275. Ibid.

276. Ray Santos, interview by David Carp. This African-based influence dovetailed with jazz musicians’ interest in other non-Western traditions, especially those emanating from Asia.

277. Acosta, *Del tambor al sintetizador*, 101.

278. Some have exaggerated Bauzá’s contributions, claiming him as a master improviser, arranger, or composer. Except for pieces such as “Lona” and “Mambo Inn,” however, Bauzá rarely composed. And his few recorded improvisations are by not among his most important contributions; several of the recorded versions of “Tanga,” for example (including the one in this edition), feature essentially the same solo by Bauzá, consisting of a repeated upper-register motif.

279. Miguel Quintana, interview on WKCR-FM; my emphasis.

included white musicians and appealed to a wide cross-section of ethnicities. Moreover, Machito's band was an eminently *regional* exponent of North American culture, firmly grounded in New York City; although the band toured throughout United States and, in later years, Europe, Japan, and beyond, in its heyday the band worked mainly in Manhattan and the Bronx. Martiniquan scholars Bernabé and Glissant, who espouse Caribbean cultural mixing, or *creolité*, provocatively state that while North Americans often eschew cultural mixing or creolization, the northeastern states, with their Jewish, Mediterranean, and Caribbean immigrant populations, approach a *creolité*.<sup>280</sup> Machito also spanned the distinctions of lowbrow and highbrow. Combining *barrio* street smarts with high-art trends, his band played for dancing, at jazz clubs, and in concert settings. African-based music and dance are founded upon call-and-response relationships in which all parties work together as a team, encoding and constituting cooperative social relations. Just as responsorial rhythms were central to Machito's music, cooperation and collaboration were central to the band as a social institution. As an Akan proverb states: "The extended family is a force." The Machito family included not only members of the band, but also its fans. Dancing Jewish "mamboniks," Cubans, Puerto Ricans, other Latinos, and African Americans all served as muses for the band, since even in concert settings, undulating body movement was the inspiration behind the Machito sound. Art historian Robert Farris Thompson states that even when outwardly secular, Afro-Cuban music encodes an underlying spirituality that makes it "religious music in disguise."<sup>281</sup> It is no accident that the original meaning of the word *mambo* is religious, and Machito's interjection of the Yorùbá-Cuban priestly greeting " *boru buya*" in the band's theme song "Tanga" was not coincidental. It's not too much to say that the Machito band's euphoric sound was a blessing that brought diverse groups together in a New York-bred inclusiveness. Machito and his Afro-Cubans traversed racial and ethnic divides to pull disparate constituencies together in an avowedly pan-American family affair.

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280. Bernabé and Glissant, "In Praise of Creoleness," 894.

281. Thompson, personal communication with the author.